The Book of Psalms

with

Romemot El

רוממות אל

Commentary of Rabbi Moshe ben Chayim Alshech (hakadosh) translated and condensed by Eliyahu MUNK

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Rabbi Moshe ben Chayim Alshech (hakadosh) was born in Adrianople 1508, and died in Damascus about 1600. He was Rabbi in Safed and Damascus, ordained by Rabbi Yoseph Karo. Though he published 140 halachic responsa, his fame spread as the most popular preacher of the century. His Torah commentary is based on sermons delivered during his lifetime. He also wrote commentaries on almost the entire Bible. His allegorical method of interpretation plus his meticulous attention to the fine points of the written text, represent a happy medium between the rational and the mystical approach. He emphasizes first and foremost the Mussar, ethical moral content of the Torah.

The editor, Mr Eliyahu Munk was born in Frankfurt on Main, where he received his education at the Samson Raphael Hirsh Realschule and the Yeshivah of Rabbi Yoseph Breuer secher tsadik livracha. He continued his education at the Yeshivah in Gateshead, England. He has been active in Jewish education in Toronto, Canada, where he served as a teacher for 25 years, at the same time pursuing a business career. Since 1978 he has moved to Jerusalem, where he has translated the monumental work of Rabbi Yitzchak Arama, "Akeydat Yitschak" which was published in 1986. His translation of the "Torat Moshe" of the Alshech appeared in 1988, and the present translation of the Alshech's commentary on Tehillim, "Romemot el" is to be followed by a translation of the Alshech's commentary on Proverbs p.G.

Excerpts from reviews: (Rabbi Balkind, Manchester, Jewish Tribune, London)

"Eliyahu Munk has put all levels of our people in his debt having made such a great contribution to the better understanding of our holy Torah... many interesting questions and wonderful answers etc. are fluently described and demonstrate the great understanding of the author. I predict that this Alshich edition will gain popularity among ordinary people and intellectuals alike...

Jerusalem Post, Rabbi A. Carlebach. Munk has once more succeeded in presenting a very readable English version of the original, providing also an index of biblical, talmudic and midrashic sources quoted as well as a list of topics dealt with by the author...

The Book of Psalms

with

Romemot El

commentary

by Rabbi Moshe ben Chayim Alshich (hakadosh)

translated and condensed by

Eliyahu Munk

second printing

Jerusalem, Israel 1992

DEDICATED

to my loving wife
Greta whose minimal
demands on my time
enabled me to bring
this work to a
speedy conclusion

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INTRODUCTION

I have reprinted overleaf a true story involving the Alshich and how he helped save someone who studied his works from certain death.

I have personally experienced two indications, which though not occult and not involving anything I have dreamed, nevertheless convinced me that *Hashgachah* is interested that having commenced the Alshich's Torat Moshe commentary on the Torah, it is my duty to continue bringing other parts of his "Torah" to a wider audience.

I had been contacted by Mr. Jeff Allen from Capetown who had heard that I was working on the translation of the Torat Moshe, and who asked me urgently to undertake translation of the Alshich's *rome-mot el* commentary on the book of Psalms. Despite my initial reluctance, since I had already scheduled translation of the *shney luchot habrit* of Rabbi Yeshayah Horwitz, the *Sheloh* (hakadosh), the events referred to earlier helped me decide to give priority to translating this commentary, and with G'd's help also the commentary on Proverbs.

In translating the *rome-mot el* commentary I have condensed far less than in either the *Akeydat Yitzchok* or the *Torat Moshe*, and what is being presented here comprises between 70 and 75 per cent of the total commentary.

The considerations which have guided me in the past as to what and how much to delete, were present here also. The reason I have deleted far less is the nature of the book of Psalms.

When approaching Torah, we are guided by the principle of *eyn mikra yotze mi-yedey peshuto*, that as a general rule, homiletical material must not substitute for or nullify the apparent meaning of scripture as evidenced by the plain unadorned text.

Since the book of Psalms is poetic rather than halachic in nature, such considerations need not apply in the same degree. A commentator, whose main task it is to demonstrate the validity and inspirational nature in our day and age of hymns composed by humans thousands of years ago – though of course inspired by the *ruach hakodesh*, holy spirit, – has far greater leeway in the way he can approach the Psalms.

To quote but one example: in Psalm 78, Asaph lists the plagues that G'd brought upon the Egyptians in Egypt. However, he omits some, and changes the order of occurrence of others. If we were to apply the yardstick of *eyn mikra yotze mi-yedey peshuto*, we would find this report as contradicting the report of the Torah in a considerable measure. As it is, however, it is clear from the outset that all Asaph had in mind was to teach an additional dimension of

these plagues, something that would not have occurred to us if we had read only the report of the Torah in the book of Exodus.

To appreciate the author's commentary fully, I believe it is important for the reader to understand that the Alshich (as do others) views mankind's history since Adam's sin as a quest for redemption, i.e. rehabilitation of the human being.

Man, whether consciously or otherwise, strives to regain Paradise lost, i.e. the moral-ethical physical level of Adam as he had been when G'd had just completed infusing him with a soul of Divine origin.

To this end, concepts such as *gilgul neshamot*, the transmigration of souls, re-incarnation, are extraordinarily helpful in tracing the progress of certain individuals towards attaining a perfect personality.

Adam bequeathed 70 years of his unexpired physical life on earth to David, to enable the latter not only to have a life on earth, but to live it in a manner that would vicariously rehabilitate him. (Adam) We understand that total rehabilitation of mankind requires that there be a direct link between first man who had been close to G'd, and the *melech hamashiach*, the Messiah, i.e. David i.e. Adam re-incarnated as a redeemer, instead of as the human being who bequeathed us our limitations, our close association with the evil urge, the *yetzer hara*.

In order to comprehend this concept and that of the special role of the Jewish people in bringing about this rehabilitation, it helps to understand that the Jewish soul is part of the Divine, and because it is only a part, it strives for re-unification with the whole it was taken from. (i.e. G'd)

If David is the prototype of the Messiah, it follows that he strives constantly to perfect himself while at the same time never to become the cause of harm or death befalling any of his Jewish adversaries who after all share this soul with him which is part of the Divine.

It will be clear to the reader that this commentary reflects many concepts which are basic to Kabbalah.

Seeing that for over 350 years, no publisher has seen fit to provide the source material upon which the Alshich's commentary is based, I have felt that it was extremely urgent to remedy this situation.

I owe a great debt to Rabbi Achyon of the Petach Tikvah Bet Hadin as well as to Rabbi Abuzaglo of Beney Berak, who have helped me in tracing this large collection of source material. The reader will thus find documentation from authentic ancient sources which form the basis of the Alshich's approach.

Since the scholarship dealing with Kabbalah has been for a long

time almost exclusively in the hands of people who themselves deny the authenticity of *Torah min Hashamayim*, i.e. that both the written and oral Torah are the revealed word of G'd, it is not surprising that most, including the most widely read scholar of Kabbalah, have denied that the Kabbalah itself is part of authentic Judaism, but is of alien origin.

I believe we must point out that if Kabbalah was studied by the greatest halachic authorities throughout the ages, that if our liturgy contains many instances of kabbalistic concepts, it is sheer nonsense to claim that the editors of all these halachot and the editors of all these prayers which are part and parcel of normative Judaism, have all been infected by alien philosophies.

Fortunately, of late, premises such as these have been challenged prominently by Professor Moshe Idel, and any reader who as a result of reading the Alshich's commentary wants to read more about Kabbalah is referred to Professor Idel's writings as both instructive and reflecting the approach of a believing and halacha practicing Jew. We also recommend the following who have written in English.

In his commentary on Torah, the Alshich follows the method of Rabbeynu Bachyah, Rabbi Yitzchak Arama, the Abravanel and others in prefacing his commentary with a list of questions outlining difficulties in the section of text to be tackled. In this commentary, by his own admission, the Alshich has usually omitted these questions in the interest of brevity, hoping that the reader will reconstruct the questions for himself once he has read the commentary.

Some of the central themes addressed by numerous Psalms, according to the author's opinion.

1) Certain souls of all those who participated in the revelation at Mount Sinai have been assigned to each generation in order to provide potential leadership qualities during that generation.

2) David's very existence was due only to the assignment to him of part of someone else's lifespan.

3) The strange phenomenon of someone who composes hymns instead of elegies at the very moment he is in danger of being killed by his adversaries.

4) Does the response by G'd to an as yet unarticulated prayer indicate a closer relationship between G'd and the petitioner than if the petitioner had first been allowed to articulate his prayer?

5) The value of praying for the needs of others, ignoring one's own needs though identical.

6) The right or duty to rejoice over the downfall of G'd's enemies though one must not rejoice over the downfall of one's own enemies.

7) What kind of afflictions are evidence of G'd's loving concern for the victim?

8) Are character traits transmitted hereditarily?

9) On the origin of the soul. (Psalm 8)

10) How can the death of one's child be the reason one composes a Psalm? (Psalm 9) On David's sin with Bat Sheva.

11) On the concept of G'd i.e. the *Shechinah* being in exile.

12) On some aspects of the suffering of the righteous in this world and the carefree life enjoyed by the patently wicked. (Psalm 10)

Some of the characteristics of David that make him the ideal prototype of the Messiah:

His absolute trust in G'd.

His self sacrifice for the land of Israel. He prefers to suffer afflictions in Eretz Yisrael to freedom from persecution outside Eretz Yisrael.

David prefers to suffer afflictions rather than be the cause of harm or death of fellow Jews, though the latter attempt to kill him and have slandered him.

When David, as king, dispenses justice, he pays the fines of the insolvent but convicted litigants out of his own pocket.

Eliahu Munk

Jerusalem Ir Hakodesh

5750

ב״ה

מעשה רב

יתהלל המתהלל השכל ויודע ספר ויקרא בו כל ימי חייו כי הנה הדור אתם ראו כולכם חזו דעו וראו שמעו והאזינו לאמרי פי אשר היתה לפנים מהמעשה אשר נעשה, והוא חקוק על הלוח בעט ברזל ועופרת ויצא תחת מכבש הדפוס בספר קיצור אלשיך על חמש מגילות שנדפס בשנת תנ״ח לפ״ק. והעתקנו והצגנו אותה פה לדעת גודל רום מעלתו וסגולתו להציל לומדיה והוגיה בה מגזירות רעות רח״ל ,כי מה שהי׳ הוא שיהי׳ ודבר ה׳ יקום לעולם. זאת התורה אשר שם משה כי הוא סם חיים ולכל בשרו מרפא. וכן העידו רבים וכן שלמים שלמדו בק״ק פוזנן אצל החסיד המופלג ה״ה כמהור״ר יצחק נ״ע ושמעו מפה טהור שסיפר להם מה ששמע מרבו המובהק מהור״ר אברהם מנוחתו כבוד שהיה דר בפולין בפאדאליע בק״ק באר והיה לומד בספר האלשיך בכל שבוע וכן היה ביום חרון אף ה׳ וסבבו השונאים את העיר בשנת ת״ח לפ״ק **בא אליו הרב מוהר״ר משה אלשיך הנ״ל בחלום ואמר לו מאחר שאתה מחבב ספר שלי באתי להזהרתיך שתעמוד ותמלט** על נפשך בשעה זו כי גגזרה גזירה על היהודים יושבי העיר הזאת למחר גזירת חרב ואבדון. ואמרתי לו האיך אעשה שאוכל להמלט. אמר לי צא ואני אהיה עמך ולא יראו אותך ותנצל. ואמרתי לו איך אעזוב אשתי ובתי הבתולה. ואמר לי לך בלבד בעצמך והם יהיו שבויים תחת יד קדר אחד ואני מבשר לך בשורה זו שזה הקדר יהיה סרים ולא ימצא אותם. וכאשר אמר לי כן היה ונפדו בקונשטנטינא ובאו אל ביתם לשלום. ע״כ ממנו תראו וכן תעשו לדורות עד אשר לא יבואו ימי הרעות לנפש עמלה בו כי נטל עליו שכרו כתניא נמי הכי למות תוצאות. וחסדי ד׳ ברוב רחמיו הוא יראנו נפלאות, אמן.

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TRANSLATION OF HEBREW TITLE PAGE *MAASSEH RAV*

Praised be all those who are blessed with intelligence and who read this book throughout their lives.

For you have seen in this generation and heard of the story which has happened a while ago and is firmly engraved and recorded with an iron pen.

It has been preserved for posterity, being printed in an edition of the abbreviated version of Rabbi Moshe Alshich's commentary on the 5 *megillot* printed in the year 5458 (i.e. 1688 A.D.)

We have copied this story here to demonstrate the power of the Alshich to protect those who study his works from disaster, G'd forbid.

What has happened once will happen again, whereas G'd's will will prevail forever. This Torah which Moses has submitted is the elixir of life, a cure for the entire body.

We have many trustworthy witnesses who have studied in the city of Posen under the renowned and saintly Rabbi Yitzchok, and who have heard from his own mouth what Rabbi Yitzchok had heard personally from his rabbi, Rabbi Avraham of sainted memory, who used to live in a district of Poland called Padalia in the community of Bar. He used to study the Alshich's book every week including the day when the Cossacks surrounded that town in the year 5408 (1648 A.D.).

Rav Moshe Alshich appeared to this Rabbi Avraham in a dream and told him that seeing that he liked his (Alshich's) commentary so much, he had come to warn him to flee for his life immediately, since a decree had been passed in heaven that on the morrow all the Jews of that community would die a violent death (in the Chmielnicki pogroms).

Rabbi Avraham demurred, saying "what chance do I have to escape"? To this the Alshich replied that he should leave, and he (the Alshich) would ensure that his flight would not be observed.

When Rabbi Avraham demurred once more, saying that he could not abandon his wife and daughter, the Alshich told him to flee without them, that his wife and daughter would be held hostage by an impotent potter who could not defile them.

Rabbi Avraham fled and saved his life. His wife and daughter were indeed held captive by such a potter and ransomed in Constantinople from where they returned home unharmed.

This is an example of the value of studying the Alshich's books. To people who do this can be applied the verse in Psalms 68,21 "G'd the Lord provides an escape from death". Clearly, in His continuing acts of love, G'd shows us miracles.

SOME BIOGRAPHICAL DATA ON THE AUTHOR

Moses ben Chayim Alshich, frequently called *hakadosh* the sainted one, based on the true story reprinted overleaf, was born in Adrianople in the year 1508, and died about 1601 in Damascus.

He studied under Rabbi Joseph Karo in Adrianople, before Rabbi Karon had migrated to Safed. His close companion in his studies was Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenasi. (the father of Nathan, Sabbatai Zevi's prophet) Rabbi Moses Alshich moved to Safed as a young man and was already one of the officiating Rabbis in that town before Rabbi Karo moved there in 1536. Rabbi Karo ordained him in the full sense of the word, giving him the *semichah* which had at that time only recently been re-introduced by Jakov Berav.

He sided with Rabbi Karo in the latter's disagreement with Jakob di Trani. He also quoted Rabbi Karo as having expressed his wish on his deathbed to put the book *me-or eynayim* by the famous Italian Jewish scholar Azaryah di Rossi in *cherem*, ban.

He presided over two *yeshivot* in Safed. One of his outstanding students was Chayim Vital, whom he gave *semichah* much later in Damascus.

He acquired an outstanding reputation both as *possek*, i.e. halachic authority and as a *darshan*, preacher. Halachic questions were submitted to him from all over the Orient, and there are over 140 responsa that have been printed and are still available.

He delivered sermons every Sabbath on the portion of the week, and these later formed the background to his commentary on the Torah called Torat Moshe.

He went to print principally to protect himself against the many claims of others to have originated his commentaries. His first commentary to be published was that on the book of Daniel called *chavatzelet hasharon* in 1568. He refrained from commenting on the final chapters of the book which deal with calculations about the dating of the arrival of the Messiah. He did not want to help reveal matters which "G'd's heart had not revealed to His own mouth".

His studies of kabbalah were rather confined by comparison to such luminaries as Yitzchak Luria and other local Kabbalists. The former had once told him that he was not destined to become a luminary in that discipline. He left Safed around 1587 due to a pestilence which raged in that town at that time. After settling in Damascus, he ordained Chayim Vital in 1590.

Shoshanat Amakim on Song of Songs appeared in 1591. Torat Moshe on Bereshit and Shemot were first printed near Constantinople in 1594/5.

In that year there also appeared his commentary on the later prophets called *Marot Hatzovot*, printed in Venice, a first commentary called *Tapuchey Zahav* on the book of Psalms was printed in 1598.

Rabbi Moshe's son Chayim published his other writings soon after his father's death in or about 1601.

There is a commentary on Lamentations called *Devarim Nichumim*; a commentary on Job called *Chelkat Moshe*; and the present commentary on Psalms *Romemot El*.

140 responsa were published in Venice in 1605. We have a commentary on *tikun chatzot* commencing with the words *hikabtzu veshim-u* printed in the *Shaarey Tziyon* prayer book published by Nathan Hanover.

The Alshich also wrote a commentary on Bereshit Rabbah which has been lost. There is a commentary on the book of Ruth called *Eyney Moshe*. The commentary on Kohelet is called *Devarim Tovim*; and his commentary on Proverbs is called *Rav Peninim*.

On the tricky question of how to reconcile man's free choice with the Almighty omniscience, the Alshich believes that G'd's articulated thinking does affect man's freedom to make a decision in some degree, whereas G'd's unarticulated thoughts do not influence man in any degree.

The Alshich believes that of the two impediments to observing Torah laws, i.e. poverty and wealth, respectively, that of poverty is the easier to deal with. Man should therefore take a positive view of being poor.

The G'd/Israel relationship, he compares to the tree/branches relationship. Similarly, he views the Jewish soul as being part of G'd. The uniqueness of G'd is reflected in the uniqueness of Israel as a people amongst all other nations.

PSALMS

Volume I

BOOK ONE

1 [1]*Happy is the man who has not followed the counsel of the wicked, or taken the path of sinners, or joined the company of the insolent;*
[2]*rather, the teaching of the LORD is his delight, and he studies that teaching day and night.*
[3]*He is like a tree planted beside streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, whose foliage never fades, and whatever it produces thrives.*

psalm 1

1. The author, without accepting the authenticity of the source, quotes the following idea as not devoid of merit. (anonymously, presumably of non Jewish origin. Ed.)

There are two categories of bliss. There is the bliss which is due to not having committed sins, and there is the even greater bliss of having done good. The bliss of not having done evil comprises 3 aspects– else it is not absolute.

1) Not having sinned in spirit as well as not having sinned in actual deed.

2) Not to have sinned unintentionally in deed due to unawareness of the act being sinful.

3) Not to have sinned in word, i.e. the stage between sinning in spirit and in deed.

atzat resha-im refers to the person troubled by sinful thoughts. The Psalmist says that a person can be termed *ashrey* as deserving of praise when he has not sinned though he has been tempted. Similarly, a person who has not committed sinful deeds of an even unintentional type, can be hailed, a person who say, has never eaten forbidden products believing them to be permitted. Such errors, if they had been made, are called by the Psalmist *bederech chata-im lo amad*, people who failed to arrest their march towards the forbidden. As long as such unintentional sinner does not repeat his carelessness, he qualifies for *ashrey*. He who DID arrest his progress towards the forbidden is deserving of an accolade, i.e. *ashrey*.

The person who neither sins in thought nor through thoughtless action but engages in idle chatter, i.e. *moshav leytzim*, does not qualify for praise. However, if a person shuns such company and avoids idle talk,– he is to be hailed, i.e. *ashrey*.

2. So far the Psalmist has described only negative virtues. Now

ספר ראשון

א א אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָלַךְ בַּעֲצַת רְשָׁעִים וּבְדֶרֶךְ
חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמָד וּבְמוֹשַׁב לֵצִים לֹא יָשָׁב:
ב כִּי אִם-בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה חֶפְצוֹ וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יֶהְגֶּה יוֹמָם
וָלָיְלָה:
ג וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שָׁתוּל עַל פַּלְגֵי מָיִם אֲשֶׁר פִּרְיוֹ יִתֵּן
בְּעִתּוֹ וְעָלֵהוּ לֹא יִבּוֹל וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה יַצְלִיחַ:

he adds positive virtues, i.e. *asse tov* (do good)– as opposed to the *sur me-ra* (shun evil). He who fills his thoughts and longing with *Torat hashem*, the Torah of G'd, making it the primary subject of conversation both by day and by night, such a person obviously also performs Torah precepts.

Such a person qualifies for even greater acclaim than the one discussed in verse 1. Therefore, "he will be like a tree planted by brooks of water".

Torah knowledge and one's subsequent relationship to G'd is possible on various levels. There are mystical aspects of Torah, commonly known as *sod*, and there is the more or less obvious meaning of the text, commonly referred to as the *peshat*.

Clearly, not everyone is capable of penetrating to the level of *sod*, the mystical. What is important however, is, that a person should WANT to attain that level, i.e. *betorat hashem cheftzo*. If THAT is our attitude to Torah, any depth we have not achieved will not be considered a deficiency on our part.

Concerning the plain meaning of Torah, the Psalmist refers to it as *betorato yehgeh*, that such a person talks about Torah matters *yomam valaylah*, both by day and by night.

3. When one conducts oneself in this fashion, one can be likened to a tree planted in an environment of purity though the tree's foliage extends over areas infested with impurity. (compare Kiddushin 40.)

This means that the soul of the *tzadik*, righteous is planted in the celestial regions. It is well known that the secrets of the mystical aspects of Torah are to be found in the higher spheres of holiness just as are the so called plain meanings of Torah.

The two may be viewed like 2 branches of the same brook, i.e. *palgey mayim*. The soul of the type of person we have described is firmly rooted in *Torat hashem*, and the other branch of the brook

4Not so the wicked; rather, they are like chaff that wind blows away.
5Therefore the wicked will not survive judgment, nor will sinners, in the assembly of the righteous.
6For the LORD cherishes the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked is doomed.

(*peleg*) is called *Torato* the plain meaning of the Torah. Seeing that this is so, such a tree, i.e. person will yield its fruit at the appropriate time.

This means that every Torah scholar through engaging his soul in the roots of Torah through constant diligent study, is as if he irrigates his soul in order to produce fruit, just like a well irrigated tree does.

This is how we have explained Isaiah 60, 21. "the creation of those whom I have planted" (i.e. *tzaddikim*). The "fruit" are the new insights that the Torah scholar has gained and communicated to us. (compare Zohar 1,33). We have explained this in greater detail in our commentary on Proverbs.

For this reason, and because *el deyot hashem*, He is a G'd of variegated knowledge, (Samuel I,2,4), G'd has assigned to each generation the souls which will be capable of developing those new insights into Torah which are vital for their respective generations. If someone who should reveal a certain *chidush*, new insight, fails to do so through laziness in his study, he is if he had denied this particular tree its proper irrigation.

Such a person will not again have the merit to discover such insights, until through transmigration of his soul he is re-incarnated in another body. According to Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, he will the be considered as *noten piryo*, yielding his fruit, but not as someone *noten piryo be-itto* who yields its fruit in the proper season.

The Psalmist reserves his *ashrey* accolade then for those who not only refrain from sin in all its aspects, but, who *betorat hashem cheftzo*, strive with all their ability to achieve Torah insights. Such people will yield their fruit in the proper season, i.e. in their first life on earth. In addition to new insights into Torah gained by such scholars,– they will also establish regulations based on their logic, designed to safeguard Torah observance.

Not every *Talmid Chacham*, Torah scholar, succeeds in his rulings gaining acceptance. The Psalmist says therefore, that the kind of *Talmid Chacham* who has fulfilled all the conditions mentioned by the Psalmist *ale-hu lo yibbol*, his leaf will not wilt, i.e. that the protective measures such a *Talmid Chacham* has instituted will not go to

ד לֹא כֵן הָרְשָׁעִים כִּי אִם כַּמֹּץ אֲשֶׁר-תִּדְּפֶנּוּ רוּחַ:
ה עַל-כֵּן לֹא יָקֻמוּ רְשָׁעִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט וְחַטָּאִים בַּעֲדַת צַדִּיקִים:
ו כִּי יוֹדֵעַ יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ צַדִּיקִים וְדֶרֶךְ רְשָׁעִים תֹּאבֵד:

waste, but will gain public acceptance, jus as foliage on the tree is a protective cover for the tree's fruit.

To the implied question – when such a *Talmid Chacham* has the chance to earn his livelihood,– seeing he is busy with Torah study both by day and by night, the Psalmist answers *vechol asher ya-asseh yatzliach*, since all his undertakings will be successful, such a *Talmid Chacham* needs to invest only very little time in pursuing matters related to his livelihood as we have learn in Berachot 35, that the scholars of the earlier generations who devoted MOST of their time to Torah study needed a minimum of time to succeed in matters of livelihood also.

4. To the argument that we witness the success of the wicked in worldly matters daily, (compare Jeremiah 12,1) rather than the success of the Torah scholar, the Psalmist replies that there is no reason to be amazed at that apparent phenomenon. The success of the wicked is totally unlike the success of the pious.

Just as the chaff which covers the kernel provides this protective cover only as long as the grain has not been harvested, whereas the wind blows off the chaff thereafter, so the success we observe the wicked achieve is of very short duration. It lasts only during the limited lifespan of its owner in this transient world. After than it is blown apart by the *ruach*, spirit (like wind) of impurity created by its very owners. (compare Samuel I 25,29 "caught in the middle of the slingshot". (like "caught by its own web")

5. One could argue that it would have been better to grant success in this world ONLY to the righteous, so that the wicked could not accuse G'd on the day of judgment of having misled them by their very success.

Similarly, some of the erstwhile righteous could argue that the sinners' success undermined their own faith in G'd. To these arguments the Psalmist replies that these matters should not concern us. The success of the wicked in this world prevents them from achieving success in their judgment after death, so that in the hereafter the *adat tzaddikim*, community of the righteous will not have to share that world with the *chata-im*, the frivolous sinners.

6. If I have stated what will happen to the sinners in the hereafter,

2 [1]*Why do nations assemble, and peoples plot vain things;*
[2]*kings of the earth take their stand, and regents intrigue together against the LORD and against His anointed?*
[3]*"Let us break the cords of their yoke, shake off their ropes from us!"*
[4]*He who is enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord mocks at them.*
[5]*Then He speaks to them in anger, terrifying them in His rage,*

it is because G'd knows and carefully monitors the path of the righteous. We know this from Exodus 2,25. "And G'd knew etc". He kept track of the fate of the Jewish people in Egypt. Whenever a person endeavours to promote purity, holiness, he is assisted by heavenly forces (Shabbat 104) There is no sinner in Israel who does not at some time in his life promote purity etc. i.e. something of positive Jewish value. At such times he receives assistance.

This means that at such times G'd does NOT allow the sinner's success and wealth to become an impediment to his doing *teshuva*, repentance. Neither, for that matter will the righteous be misled by observing the success of the wicked, since G'd *toved*, destroys the way of the wicked, i.e. does not let it infect the truly righteous so that they will not sin on THAT account.

Psalm 2.

1. Having described in the previous Psalm that G'd monitors the lives of the righteous, (Kiddushin 40), whereas the wicked do not enjoy the same concern of G'd and even their successes in this world are only in order to justify depriving them of a share in the hereafter, so their success will be like chaff, blown away by the wind, Israel replies that if all this applied only to the wicked of Israel, we would not have challenged this explanation.

However, why should the gentiles be allowed *ragshu* = to assemble, *yehegu rik*, and the nations be permitted to indulge in words empty of meaning? Why can they rail against G'd and His anointed, the Messiah? Why does G'd endure THEIR blasphemy? The Psalmist expresses his amazement at G'ds longstanding patience with the blasphemies of the gentile nations. (compare Ezekiel 38,18)

2. What precisely is this *rik* that the gentiles talk and speculate about?

ב

א לָמָּה רָגְשׁוּ גוֹיִם וּלְאֻמִּים יֶהְגּוּ רִיק:
ב יִתְיַצְּבוּ מַלְכֵי-אֶרֶץ וְרוֹזְנִים נוֹסְדוּ יָחַד עַל-יְהוָה וְעַל מְשִׁיחוֹ:
ג נְנַתְּקָה אֶת-מוֹסְרוֹתֵימוֹ וְנַשְׁלִיכָה מִמֶּנּוּ עֲבֹתֵימוֹ:
ד יוֹשֵׁב בַּשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׂחָק אֲדֹנָי יִלְעַג לָמוֹ:
ה אָז יְדַבֵּר אֵלֵימוֹ בְאַפּוֹ וּבַחֲרוֹנוֹ יְבַהֲלֵמוֹ:

They are preparing to appoint kings and rulers against the day of "Gog and Magog" to fight against G'd and His Messiah. (see Ezekiel 38,18)

3. The nations in their concern about the coming battle in the days of Gog and Magog conclude by agreeing that instead of opposing G'd and the Messiah AT THAT TIME, it would be better to sever the link between Israel and its G'd, i.e. *nenatkah et mosoroteymo*, and thereby to forestall the redemption altogether.

They propose to do this by enslaving us and preventing us from observing Torah commandments. In this fashion, they hope to prevent G'd from saving the Jewish people since we ourselves would cast off the ropes (yoke) of the mitzvot, *nashlicha avateymo*. Possibly the *avot* heavy ropes refer to the merit of our forefathers which we would forfeit by our actions. *Mossroteymo* would refer to the bands connecting Israel and the Messiah on the one hand, and G'd on the other.

Why does G'd not humble the gentiles when He hears them utter such plans?

4. To this the holy spirit replies by saying "the One who dwells in the heavens merely smiles and mocks them". This means that at THIS time G'd merely smiles. But in the future *az yedabber eleymo be-appo* etc.", He will speak to them in His wrath". We know that when the temple was destroyed, though G'ds great name withdrew to the heavens (Shemot Rabba 2,2), the Presence of G'd represented by His *adnut* i.e. the name indicating His sovereignty, remained at the Western Wall. (Shir Hashirim Rabba 2,9) It is the "name" which mocks the nations, though the *yoshev bashamayim*, the one who dwells in heaven, merely smiles. G'd mocks by saying that the reason He has left part of the *Shechinah* on earth was to fulfil *af gam zot be-eretz oyveyhem lo me-asstim* (Leviticus 26,44 Yerushalmi Taanit 2,1) that I will not totally despise them when they are amongst the gentiles.

5. Not that in the future all His names would be needed to battle

6"But I have installed My king on Zion, My holy mountain!"
7Let me tell of the decree: the LORD said to me, "You are My son, I have fathered you this day.
8Ask it of Me, and I will make the nations your domain; your estate, the limits of the earth.

the gentile nations. He only needs to despatch against them a detachment of *malachey ra-im* (*af* and *chemah* are two types of executioner, Yerushalmi Taanit 2,1) He will confound them by means of those agents.

6. To the question why all this cannot be accomplished by David already now,– the holy spirit replies "I have long ago appointed My king",– a reference to what happened at the covenant with Abraham. (Genesis 15,11) "The *ayit*, (vulture) descended on the carcasses".

David, who was likened to the vulture, asked to destroy all the nations, but Abraham prevented him. (Bereshit Rabba 44,21)

This is the meaning of *vayashev otam Avram*, Abraham chased the vulture away. This is the meaning of "Abraham sold the Jewish people to the nations", he did so by saying that G'd should RATHER make them suffer exile than purgatory. For this reason G'd could not allow David at this stage to destroy the nations.

This is also what our sages referred to when they said that Abraham called the temple "mountain", Isaac called it "field" and Jacob called it "house" (Pessachim 88), Abraham called the first temple mountain since he knew it was going to be destroyed and a desolate mountain top would be all that would remain. Isaac called it *sadeh*, field, since the second temple which was built with the help of his merit would be destroyed and ploughed over like a field. We must also mention Bamidbar Rabba 3,4 which we explained in Parshat Noach, that whenever the word *va-ani*, and I, occurs in connection with G'd, it refers to G'd and His celestial court.

The word *ani* refers to the *bet din*, heavenly court, the additional letter *vav* refers to G'd Himself.

We note that G'd did not say concerning His king *Himlachti*, I have crowned him king, but rather *nassachti* I have crowned him prince. This means that David's kingdom is not yet at hand (as the Messiah), that he does not have the right at this time to destroy the gentile kingdoms.

Had G'd crowned David as king already at this time, it would have conflicted with the legacy of Abraham that the Jewish people would experience exile– to save them from purgatory. The words *al tziyon*

ו וַאֲנִי נָסַכְתִּי מַלְכִּי עַל צִיּוֹן הַר קָדְשִׁי:
ז אֲסַפְּרָה אֶל חֹק יְהוָה אָמַר אֵלַי בְּנִי אַתָּה אֲנִי הַיּוֹם
יְלִדְתִּיךָ:
ח שְׁאַל מִמֶּנִּי וְאֶתְּנָה גוֹיִם נַחֲלָתֶךָ וַאֲחֻזָּתְךָ אַפְסֵי-
אָרֶץ:

HAR kodshi, are the hint that Abraham having foreseen the destruction of the temple, chose exile for the Jews living at that time. (the word *al* is used in the sense of "because")

7. The word *chok* is similar to the word *gezeyrah*, a decree, as we have seen in Bamidbar Rabba 19,1 concerning the *Para Adumah*, red heifer, i.e. I have made this decree without offering a rationale.

Having said that G'd did not want to crown David king over the whole earth lest he would destroy the gentile nations and there would then be no nations left for the Jewish people to serve their exile amongst, why did G'd not crown him and withhold from his the right to destroy the gentile nations? After all, Solomon did not destroy the gentile nations and enjoyed virtual control over all the nations at the time?

It would appear therefore that G'd was simply not QUITE prepared to make David king over the earth.

To correct such an impression, David says– "I tell you that this was a *chok*, an arbitrary decision by G'd not related to any deficiency on my part. G'd has told me "you are my son", not like OTHER human beings who have 3 partners who have created them, i.e. father mother and G'd.

G'd considers me as if He alone were my parent, seeing that otherwise I would have been born an aborted foetus, a *nefel*, and my natural parents would not have had me as a living child anyways. (Kiddushim 30, Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 19).

Hence it is as if *ani hayom yeladeticha*, I had given birth to you (David) this day. Since the word *ani* grammatically speaking, is superfluous, we can see in it a reference to the meaning of *ani* which we discussed in verse 6. The Shechinah, i.e. the Court of the Almighty, are in lieu of natural parents, i.e. the other two thirds of the partnership that between them sire every human being.

8. Seeing that the relationship between G'd and David is such an intimate one, the holy spirit continues "ask of Me something, and I will grant it". What G'd means is that it is something that should not

9*You can smash them with an iron mace, shatter them like potter's ware."*
10*So now, O kings, be prudent; accept discipline, you rulers of the earth!*
11*Serve the LORD in awe; tremble with fright,*
12*pay homage in good faith, lest He be angered, and your way be doomed in the mere flash of His anger. Happy are all who take refuge in Him.*

conflict with Abraham's choice of exile over purgatory for his descendants.

The request that David can make therefore is *ve-etnah goyim nachalatecha*, I will make the nations your inheritance. This means that you David will rule over them severely even, but cannot destroy them.

9. "You will break them with an iron rod, you will smash them like a potter's vessel". David explains that the REASON he had not asked G'd for such wide ranging powers was that he did not trust himself NOT to smash the nations like a potter's vessel which cannot be repaired, and in that event the remedy for an errant Israel, namely exile, would have been jeopardised.

10. On the verse (Song of Songs 2,7 and 3,5) "if you dare cause hatred or disturb the love", the Talmud Ketuvot 111 explains that G'd made the nations swear not to treat the Jewish people in exile too harshly. In this instance, it is made to sound as if G'd addresses them reminding them that since He had not allowed David to annihilate them, (the kings of the gentile nations) they in turn must not impose overly harsh strictures on Israel. *hivassru shoftey aretz*, restrain yourselves, discipline yourselves judges of the earth!.

11. Since David has seen that his advice to wipe out the nations already at this stage has not been granted in order that Israel at a later stage in history can expiate for its sin by the experience of exile, he becomes afraid that Israel's heart would melt, faint at such a prospect. They are frightened that they would become totally assimilated during the exile experience. Therefore he speaks to those who will undergo such exile, and offers them encouragement. He suggests that if they follow his advice their redemption will be accelerated.

The advice is "on the one hand serve the Lord with fear and reverence, on the other hand rejoice– albeit with trembling".

Jacob the most accomplished of the patriarchs, though he always

ט תִּרְעֵם בְּשֵׁבֶט בַּרְזֶל כִּכְלִי יוֹצֵר תְּנַפְּצֵם׃
י וְעַתָּה מְלָכִים הַשְׂכִּילוּ הִוָּסְרוּ שֹׁפְטֵי אָרֶץ׃
יא עִבְדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בְּיִרְאָה וְגִילוּ בִרְעָדָה׃
יב נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר פֶּן יֶאֱנַף וְתֹאבְדוּ דֶּרֶךְ כִּי־יִבְעַר כִּמְעַט
אַפּוֹ אַשְׁרֵי כָּל־חוֹסֵי בוֹ׃

served the Lord meticulously avoiding sin, was still always worried that he had committed some unintentional sins. This is what David means "even if you serve the Lord,– *beyirah*, remain constantly worried about unintentional sins you may commit". (Talmud Berachot 4). On the other hand, if you develop this worry to such a degree that you are *bir-adah* in a state of trembling, then *gilu* rejoice that you have developed such a healthy attitude to your service of the Lord. Such an attitude leads to true piety, to true cleaving to the Lord. There are two dangers that face you in exile. 1) The danger that you will stop serving the Lord seeing that even loyal service to G'd does not improve your situation, and you remain in servitude. 2) The second danger is the very length of the exile which may lead you to abandon hope that you will ever be redeemed, and which therefore prevents you from doing true *teshuva*, repentance, resulting in turn in *toved* that you would perish. This even though the merit of the patriarchs had brought about your redemption in Egypt prior to you your having truly repented. (Yalkut Shimoni on Hoseah 519)

Therefore, concerning danger #1, David says "serve the Lord"!, concerning danger #2, he says:

12. "gird yourselves with purity lest He become angry and you perish on the way".

The *neshek* weaponry you must employ to endure during exile against the kingdoms, is purity of heart, i.e. not to question G'ds timetable though it seems interminable, nor to question the harshness of the exile experience.

Bar means to be *bar leyvav*, of stout heart, i.e. your weapons are a stout heart.

Because G'd is good and upright, (Psalms 25,8) He shows the sinners the way. If you cause G'd to become angry, you will lose the way *tovdu derech* to *teshuvah*, repentance, and will not find it.

To the query how it is possible to exist without temptation, and never to despair when one experiences sudden tragedy since His wrath will be kindled so soon, i.e. *ki yivar kimat appo*? David replies

3 [1]*A psalm of David when he fled from his son Absalom.*
[2]*O Lord, my foes are so many! Many are those who attack me;*
[3]*many say of me, "There is no deliverance for him through God."*
[4]*But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, He who holds my head high.*
[5]*I cry aloud to the LORD, and He answers me from His holy mountain.*

"do not worry!". On the contrary, G'ds anger will only ALMOST burn, i.e. *kimat*, since those who display faith in Him will deserve to be hailed, i.e. *ashrey*.

G'ds attribute of coming to the assistance of those who have faith in Him will MORE than outweigh the *af*, the anger He may be about to display.

Or,– the advice may be that if you are afraid of the governments which you are in servitude to, do not throw up your hands in despair, on the contrary, if you will display the same kind of reverence in your attitude to G'd that you display in your attitude to your earthly superiors, He will accept this as an atonement for your sins; if you even tremble before Him, you may rejoice, since you will achieve an even higher level of atonement. Apart from atonement you have another weapon to fight the ravages of exile,– namely *tohar lev*– the merit of a pure and faithful heart.

Psalm 3.

1–4. Our sages (Berachot 7) query why the flight from his son Absalom who wanted to kill his own father David can be the occasion for a hymn. David should have composed a song of lament rather than a hymn.

Rabbi Shimon ben Avishalom explains this by means of a parable.

A person who was a debtor and who had signed a promissory note, was sad as long as he had not been able to pay off the note. Once had repaid the note, his spirits rose and he had cause to rejoice. Similarly, in the case of David. Since G'd had said to him "here I will bring troubles emanating from your own house", (Samuel II 12,11) he had worried that a slave or a bastard son might attack him and show him no pity. The moment he heard that it was his own son Absalom who led the rebellion, he was happy, believing Absalom

ג א מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם בְּנוֹ:
ב יְהוָה מָה רַבּוּ צָרָי רַבִּים קָמִים עָלָי:
ג רַבִּים אֹמְרִים לְנַפְשִׁי אֵין יְשׁוּעָתָה לוֹ בֵּאלֹהִים סֶלָה:
ד וְאַתָּה יְהוָה מָגֵן בַּעֲדִי כְּבוֹדִי וּמֵרִים רֹאשִׁי:
ה קוֹלִי אֶל יְהוָה אֶקְרָא וַיַּעֲנֵנִי מֵהַר קָדְשׁוֹ סֶלָה:

would have pity on him. Hence, he commenced with the words *mizmor*, a Psalm.

This parable seems inappropriate. It begins by stressing the element of repaying a debt and concludes by discussing the emotion of pity. Besides, David's troubles were not over by any means at the time he commenced this Psalm.

However, first, David gave thanks as soon as he had to flee, since he considered the anguish involved in that experience as equivalent to having paid his debt (for his sin).

Then he felt that there was no guarantee that merely fleeing was already equivalent to having repaid his debt, that perhaps he would find himself in danger still. When he knew that his son led the rebellion, he felt certain that his life would be spared, and that his anguish would be restricted to the experience of the flight.

The verse then has to be understood thus. *mizmor*, i.e. David sang that his flight was due to Absalom his son. He says if ONLY Absalom had pursued him, he would have felt happy, believing to have paid his debt by undergoing such a humiliating experience. However, now, that "many have ganged up on me", (verse 2–4) he appeals to G'd as the only means of rescue.

5. By rights, we would have expected *koli el hashem yikra*, my voice will call out to G'd, i.e. "my voice, IT will call out to G'd", instead of "I will cry out". If *ekra* is right, it could have said *ekra be-koli*, David however, is saying that in the midst of all his troubles he was about to raise his voice to G'd, i.e. *koli ekra*.

However, *terem ekra*, before I had a chance to raise my voice *vaya-aneni*, He has already answered me. When one recites– say the *amidah* prayer,– the first three benedictions do not contain any requests. When David refers to G'd answering him before he had raised his voice, he means before he raised his voice making requests of G'd. We have an example of this when Rabbi Chiyah and his sons prayed together. (compare Baba Metzia 85. The story is listed in greater detail in our commentary on Psalms 145,20)

The answer David received was from the *midat hadin*, the

6*I lie down and sleep and wake again, for the LORD*
sustains me.
7*I have no fear of the myriad forces arrayed against me*
on every side.
8*Rise, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God! For You slap all*
my enemies in the face, You break the teeth of the
wicked.
9*Deliverance is the LORD's; Your blessing be upon Your*
people!

4 1*For the leader; with instrumental music, A psalm of*
David.
2*Answer me when I call, O God, my vindicator! You*
freed me from distress; have mercy on me and hear my
prayer.

attribute of justice, which is the manifestation of the *shechinah* Divine Presence at the site of the altar ever since the universe has been created. (Bereshit Rabba 19,7) David implies that if every time G'd had saved him, He would have deducted from his merits, he could only have been answered by the attribute of mercy, i.e. *midat harachamim*, not by the attribute of justice. This is his firm conviction, i.e. *selah*.

6. Another proof of David's faith that G'd will be with him, David says, is the fact that "I lay down, slept, and G'd awoke me"

Anyone else undergoing problems such as David's would be too emotionally wound up to lie down and calmly go to sleep.

However, "I have not lost a wink of sleep" and awake at night, I compose this hymn to sing it. All this can only be because G'd is my support. The kabbalists as well as the Talmud Pessachim 117 state that whenever a Psalm begins with the words *mizmor le-david*, this is proof that the *ruach hakodesh*, holy spirit had come to rest on David BEFORE he had begun to compose. When the Psalm is introduced however, by the words *le-david mizmor*, this indicates that the holy spirit descended on David only AFTER he had commenced composing. (It appears that the version in the Talmud contradicts the interpretation of the Zohar and the author. Ed.) David was serene, else the *ruach hakodesh*, proof of the Presence of the *shechinah* would not have descended upon him. (Shabbat 30).

Another proof that G'd is on David's side, is the allegorical meaning

ו אֲנִי שָׁכַבְתִּי וָאִישָׁנָה הֱקִיצוֹתִי כִּי יְהוָה יִסְמְכֵנִי׃
ז לֹא-אִירָא מֵרִבְבוֹת עָם אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שָׁתוּ עָלָי׃
ח קוּמָה יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי אֱלֹהַי כִּי-הִכִּיתָ אֶת-כָּל-אֹיְבַי
לֶחִי שִׁנֵּי רְשָׁעִים שִׁבַּרְתָּ׃
ט לַיהוָה הַיְשׁוּעָה עַל-עַמְּךָ בִרְכָתֶךָ סֶלָה׃

ד

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ בִּנְגִינוֹת מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד׃

of *shechivah* = *meetah*, lying down as a simile for death. David says "I was dead", i.e. I was Adam until G'd re-incarnated me = *hekitzoti*, woke me up, after a sleep of 2000 years. Surely G'd did not awaken me unless He wants to help me perfect myself and my soul is not EMPTY of merits. Even if Absalom were to kill my body, I need not fear concerning my soul.

7. Therefore I do not fear the tens of thousands that are part of Absalom's army. He is at best *saviv*, around me, he cannot harm my essence, my soul.

8. Since they have said that only G'ds attribute of mercy could save me, that I do not rate salvation by the attribute of justice, I say *kumah hashem*, i.e. remove Yourself attribute of mercy, and *hoshi-eyni elokay*, save me my Lord (attribute of justice)! I do this so that those who thought that my only recourse is G'ds mercy will be proved wrong. My problem is, says David, that if You save me by means of the attribute of justice, You will smite all my enemies on the cheek, *ki hikita et kol oyvay*. However, this time the situation is different from previous ones when my enemies were usually gentiles. The teeth of the wicked which You smashed were gentiles and I did not mind that they were killed.

9. Now, however, that both warring factions are Jews, i.e. that there is civil strife, it is necessary that G'd employ His attribute of mercy. I cannot ask the *midat hadin*, attribute of justice, in order that Your blessings will be on Your people forever.

Psalm 4.

2. A king has two friends, each of whom requires a favour from his monarch, something the king is aware of. In one instance, the king tells the friend/petitioner "do not bother to plead with me, since I am aware of your needs and I have already granted the request you

3You men, how long will my glory be mocked, will you love illusions, have recourse to frauds?
4Know that the LORD singles out the faithful for Himself; the LORD hears when I call to Him.
5So tremble, and sin no more; ponder it on your bed, and sigh.

were about to make". In the case of his other friend however, the king does permit him to verbalise his request before granting it.

It is apparent that the king showed MORE regard for the second of his two friends, since he took time out to listen to the friend's request. I have heard Psalm 21,3, "the desire of his heart You have given him,– you have not withheld the request of his lips" as an example of the parable quoted.

We also know that there are 3 ways in which G'd can respond to prayer.

1) Sometimes G'd responds before the request has been formulated; i.e. *terem yikr-u vaani e-eneh*, before they call I already answer. (Isaiah 65,24).

2) G'd responds promptly after the prayer has been offered.

3) G'd responds after the prayer (request) has been repeated a number of times on different occasions.

The situation outlined in #1 can be subdivided into instances where G'd, though He has already decided to grant the prayer, nevertheless wants to hear it verbalised by the petitioner. This is implied in our verse in the words *ve-areshet sefatav*, and the request of his lips. (Psalms 21,3)

In some instances G'd does not want to hear the request formulated since He has already granted it.

David says here in his modesty that he is content if G'd treats him like the petitioners in group #2, and answers his prayers promptly AFTER his prayer has been offered.

3. What David asks for is that G'd turn His face against those who claim *shav avod elokim*, it is useless to serve the Lord, (Maleachi 3,14). To these people he says *beney ish*, sons of man, how long will you view what I regard as my honour to be my shame?, i.e. *kelimah*?

Why do you consider the privilege of suffering *yissurim*, afflictions in this world as something shameful?

This could only be because you overrate the empty pleasures of this world and keep seeking deception, i.e. *te-ehavun riyk, tevakshu chazav selah.*

ג בְּקָרְאִי עֲנֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי צִדְקִי בַּצָּר הִרְחַבְתָּ לִּי חָנֵּנִי
וּשְׁמַע תְּפִלָּתִי׃

ד בְּנֵי-אִישׁ עַד-מֶה כְּבוֹדִי לִכְלִמָּה תֶּאֱהָבוּן רִיק
תְּבַקְשׁוּ כָזָב סֶלָה׃

ה וּדְעוּ כִּי הִפְלָה יְהוָה חָסִיד לוֹ יְהוָה יִשְׁמַע בְּקָרְאִי
אֵלָיו׃

ו רִגְזוּ וְאַל-תֶּחֱטָאוּ אִמְרוּ בִלְבַבְכֶם עַל-מִשְׁכַּבְכֶם וְדֹמּוּ
סֶלָה׃

4. You should realise that through this very *tzarah* affliction, *hiflah hashem oti*, G'd has set me wonderfully apart, *chassid lo*, as someone who is truly pious and cleaves to Him. You can see this because G'd does hear me whenever I call on Him.

5. In Bereshit Rabba 65,22, we are told that Yikum, a nephew of Rabbi Yossi ben Yoezer rode on his horse on the Sabbath at a time when the latter was being taken to execution. They carried a beam in front of Rabbi Yossi ben Yoezer (when he was being hung by order of the government) Yikum made sarcastic comments to Rabbi Yossi, comparing the "horse" the latter was "riding", i.e. the beam he would be hung from, with the horse and finery that he himself was riding on. Rabbi Yossi told him that if that was the reward that G'd gave to scoffers, how much greater would be his own reward seeing that he had been observant all his life. The successful sinner should learn from the experience of Rabbi Yossi that if the latter underwent *yisurim*, afflictions in this life, the "successful" sinner would undergo even greater afflictions after his death.

On the other hand, the *tzaddik*, righteous person can learn from the success experienced by the sinner in THIS world that he, the *tzaddik* will be in line for far greater success in the hereafter.

Concerning the wicked who congratulate themselves on their successful careers in this life, and who mock the righteous and their suffering, – David says *rigzu ve-al techet-u* you should use this phenomenon to tremble and desist from sinning in the future. If you would only apply simple logic, you would know that you are in line for punishment in the event you live a sinful life.

Do not sin as a result of drawing the WRONG conclusions when you see the *tzaddik* suffer. The only reason you are apt to employ such faulty logic is that you live and act as if death were not around

6Offer sacrifices in righteousness and trust in the LORD.
7Many say, "O for good days!" Bestow Your favor on us, O LORD.
8You put joy into my heart when their grain and wine show increase.
9Safe and sound, I lie down and sleep, for You alone, O LORD, keep me secure.

the corner. If only *imru bilvavchem* you would say in your hearts, *al mishkavchem ve-daumu selah* tell yourselves that you are close to your *mishkav* i.e. deathbed, and *daumu selah* eternal silence,– you would not reason so foolishly.

Alternatively,– the words *imru bilvavchem* can be understood (as in Deut. 6,5) as referring to the heart's devotion when you are on your bed, i.e. reciting *keriyat shema*, at which time *daumu selah* you have to remain silent. After all, part of that recital is the reminder that your love for G'd must include– under certain conditions– *bechol nafshecha*, that you even give up your life for Him to demonstrate your love, or *bechol me-odecha* all your material assets. These are the greatest afflictions man can be subjected to.

If suffering afflictions would be a sign that one is evil in the eyes of G'd, why would G'd order that those who love Him must be prepared to sacrifice their lives and their money for Him?

The truth is the reverse then. He whom G'd loves, He disciplines. (Proverbs 13,12). The Psalmist uses the example of *keriyat shema al hamitah*, the last prayer a person utters at night before he goes to sleep,– since at that time a person contemplates the proximity of death and what this entails more than at any other time. (Berachot 57, sleep equals 1/60 of death.)

6. The statement in Avot 3,13, "where there is no flour there is no Torah, and where there is no Torah there is no flour", seems a contradiction. However, what is meant is, if he who does not observe the Torah excuses himself by saying that he needs to look after his livelihood, and that if only G'd made him wealthy he would soon demonstrate how devoted he is to Torah, he is told by G'd that the reverse is applicable. Seeing that in a contest as to who is more credible man or G'd, G'd would certainly be viewed as more credible, G'd tells such a person *im eyn Torah* as long as you have not demonstrated loyalty to Torah, *eyn kemach* you have no claim to flour, i.e. material wealth.

ו זִבְחוּ זִבְחֵי-צֶדֶק וּבִטְחוּ אֶל-יְהוָה:
ז רַבִּים אֹמְרִים מִי-יַרְאֵנוּ טוֹב נְסֵה-עָלֵינוּ אוֹר פָּנֶיךָ
יְהוָה:
ח נָתַתָּה שִׂמְחָה בְלִבִּי מֵעֵת דְּגָנָם וְתִירוֹשָׁם רָבּוּ:
ט בְּשָׁלוֹם יַחְדָּו אֶשְׁכְּבָה וְאִישָׁן כִּי אַתָּה יְהוָה לְבָדָד
לָבֶטַח תוֹשִׁיבֵנִי:

David uses similar logic here. Israel was told to return to G'd in repentance, after which G'd will listen to its pleas. You might counter by demanding that G'd FIRST would demonstrate His credibility that there is indeed a hereafter etc. by making our life in THIS world pleasant, and then after having seen such a sample they would do *teshuvah*, repentance!

To such a demand David replies *zivchu zivchey tzedek, u-bitchu el Hashem*, you must first offer sacrifices as a sign that you have faith in G'd. Then He will deal kindly with you.

Better that you display trust in Him first, than that He should have to take your promise on trust! It is always better to have faith in G'd than to have faith in you!

7. I have said that when the successful sinners observe the suffering of the righteous, they ought to draw the correct conclusions regarding what awaits these sinners after death. On the other hand, the suffering righteous person should console himself by reasoning that surely the bliss in store for him after death must be far greater than that experienced by the wicked in this life.

However, says David, I have seen many people err and request a sample of the bliss in the hereafter already in this life, in order to re-inforce their belief in reward in the hereafter, and in order to intensify their service of the Lord which would otherwise have been undermined by their observing the success of the wicked. This is what is meant by *nessah aleynu or paneha* lift up for us, give us a sign of Your countenance, since You are a merciful G'd!

8. This is a faulty attitude!. There is no greater sign that the righteous will experience bliss in the hereafter than the very success of the wicked in this life! *me-et deganom vetirosham rabu*, than the time when their corn and wine harvests increase. By this very phenomenon says David, *natata simcha belibbi*, You have given joy in my heart!. The moment I saw THEM succeed, I rejoiced in the success that awaits me still.

9. David exclaims that when he observes the physical success of

5 [1]*For the leader; on* nehiloth. *A psalm of David.*
[2]*Give ear to my speech, O LORD; consider my utterance.*
[3]*Heed the sound of my cry, my king and God, for I pray to You.*
[4]*Hear my voice, O LORD, at daybreak; at daybreak I plead before You, and wait.*
[5]*For You are not a God who desires wickedness; evil cannot abide with You;*

his enemies, he is reassured that not only his soul will receive its due in the world to come but that ***beshalom yachdav***, in unison with his body ***eshk evah ve-ishan*** will I lie down and sleep, i.e. spend the time in my grave with my body intact. My body will also be re-surrected says he, as we know from the talmudic statement ***David melech yissrael chay vekayam***, David the king of Israel is alive and endures. (Rosh Hashanah 25, Zohar 1,192) The fact that I will be ***badad***, alone in the grave (without worms etc) is my reassurance that You will put me in a safe place.

Psalm 5

2. We have learned in Rosh Hashanah 35, that a person should compose his prayer before commencing to verbalise it. Sometimes G'd already listens, i.e. responds in His mind while the petitioner is still in the process of composing the prayer as we explained on Isaiah 65,24, "before they will call, I will answer". G'd means that ***od hem medabrim***, while they are still speaking, i.e. they are not yet PRAYING, I will answer.

This is meant here when David says ***amoray ha-azini***, listen while I am still speaking– before I have gotten around to actually pray.

Once my thoughts are properly organised,– my tongue will utter the prayers fluently. Then it will be a question of ***hakshivah lekol shav-i***, listen to the sound of my pleading for help.

Since people,– once they have their speech pat– are apt to recite it with less fervour, ***kavanah***, because they are FAMILIAR with the text, David asks ***amaray ha-azinah*** as well as ***binah hagigi***, listen to my words while I am full of concentration.

3. However, "listen to the sound of my plea", and not to my improperly formulated "hagigi" meditation.

When I address You as ***malki elokay***, my king, my Lord,– i.e. in Your capacity as the attribute of justice, do not overly scrutinise the relationship between my spoken words and the meditations of my heart.

ה

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ אֶל-הַנְּחִילוֹת מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
ב אֲמָרַי הַאֲזִינָה יְהוָה בִּינָה הֲגִיגִי:
ג הַקְשִׁיבָה לְקוֹל שַׁוְעִי מַלְכִּי וֵאלֹהָי כִּי-אֵלֶיךָ אֶתְפַּלָּל:
ד יְהוָה בֹּקֶר תִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי בֹּקֶר אֶעֱרָךְ לְךָ וַאֲצַפֶּה:
ה כִּי לֹא אֵל חָפֵץ רֶשַׁע אָתָּה לֹא יְגָרְךָ רָע:

Or,– (verses 2–3) as we commented on Psalm 4,2, even those whose requests G'd grants prior to their having been voiced,– He still likes to hear those prayers verbalised. Therefore, David says, "do not refrain from listening to my plea"!

4. The reason that David asks G'd not to scrutinise his meditations too closely is not that he believes them to be frivolous, on the contrary, although he is so conscious of formulating his plea so carefully that he does not need to prepare it every time, he still edits it in the morning. So he does again the following morning i.e. *e-erach le-cha*. Although the only prayers requiring this kind of preparation are those offered at infrequent intervals, he, David does so in order to be free of all extraneous thoughts before concentration on his prayer. (compare Berachot 30).

5. The reason I said not to scrutinise my thought processes, says David, is because I know You are not a G'd who takes pleasure in *resha*, lawlessness. We know this from Bereshit Rabba 39,6. which interprets Psalms 45,8. "You love righteousness, hate *resha* when G'd said to Abraham "you loved righteousness in order to find justification for His creatures, and you hated lawlessness so as to prevent the world from being guilty". (Abraham did not hate evil in order to assert his power, but because he was a friend of people, had their best interests at heart, something they would not be able to realise if they pursued evil)

This is similar to the verse (Deut 25,1) *vehirshi-u et harasha*, they will condemn the wicked. The meaning of our verse is similar to Isaiah 57,16,– "for I will not quarrel forever", i.e. G'd does not seek VICTORY, on the contrary, He prefers to be vanquished.

The Psalmist says "since you do not like *resha*, tyranny, lawlessness,– *lo yagurcha ra*, evil will not even dwell with You as a transient.

On Samuel II 12,13, "G'd has also removed your sin", the Zohar comments that the destructive forces created by David's sin had stood before G'd as his accuser. G'd told David (through the prophet Nathan) that He had also removed this destructive force.

[6]wanton men cannot endure in Your sight. You detest all evildoers;
[7]You doom those who speak lies; murderous, deceitful men the LORD abhors.
[8]But I, through Your abundant love, enter Your house; I bow down in awe at Your holy temple.

Proof that G'd does not like evil, ***resha***, is that You IMMEDIATELY removed the ***kateygar***, accuser. As soon as You informed me of my sin, You removed the ***mashchit***, destructive force. I did not NEED to recite lenghty prayers and intense devotions.

6. This is part of David's prayer. The ***holle-lim***, boasters will NOT prevail, will not have any standing before You. (the reference is to Doag and Achitofel who had asked David sarcastic questions in the presence of the elders, wanting to know the penalty for adultery.– David had answered them that the penalty was death by hanging without loss of one's share in the hereafter, but he had added that the penalty for shaming someone in public included loss of one's share in the hereafter)

This kind of boastful behaviour is called ***hollelut***. (Sanhedrin 107) The words ***neged eynecha***, in the presence of Your eyes, refer to the hereafter and are parallel to such statements as Isaiah 64,4. "no human eye has seen it, only G'd Himself". (such sights are reserved for the hereafter)

Those people, i.e. the boasters, will not have a share in the hereafter. Although, You G'd hate evil doers-such as adulterers– the ones who will not enjoy the world to come are ONLY the ***hollelot***, the ones who shame others in public.

7. I know You will destroy those who utter deceptions, says David. ***Te-abed***, is an expression which covers the loss of both worlds.

However, one of the two types mentioned, the man of bloodshed AND deceit You detest already NOW. The beginning of the verse speaks about several people i.e. ***dovrey***, whereas the end of the verse speaks about a single individual i.e. ***ish***. Verse 10 again commences with a reference to a single individual i.e. ***be-fiyhu***, in his mouth, concluding this time with the plural ***gronam, leshonam***, their throat, their tongue. Why is this? The whole sequence is interrupted by verse 8 and 9.

Our sages (Bereshit Rabba 32,1) say that ***ish damim***, the man of bloodshed refers to Achitofel's advice to Absalom to pursue David while his men were still tired, and to kill them. (Samuel II, chapter 17 1–4)

ה לֹא-יִתְיַצְּבוּ הוֹלְלִים לְנֶגֶד עֵינֶיךָ שָׂנֵאתָ כָּל-פֹּעֲלֵי
אָוֶן:
ו תְּאַבֵּד דֹּבְרֵי כָזָב אִישׁ-דָּמִים וּמִרְמָה יְתָעֵב יְהוָה:
ז וַאֲנִי בְּרֹב חַסְדְּךָ אָבוֹא בֵיתֶךָ אֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶל-הֵיכַל
קָדְשְׁךָ בְּיִרְאָתֶךָ:

We could deduce therefore that this hymn too was composed during the period of David's flight from Absalom.

David then is asking G'd NOT to kill them on HIS account, since he does not want to become the cause of their punishment; rather, he asks for them to be deprived of their share in the hereafter on account of their GENERAL trickery and deception.

After all, G'd destroys anyone who practices deceit and one of them even a man of bloodshed into the bargain, who wanted MANY Jewish people to be killed. He deserves destruction on that account alone.

We have a rule that whoever has been the cause of his fellowman's punishment, is not allowed within the confines of the righteous. (Shabbat 149)

David, desirous of entering the celestial temple ***beytecha*** and of at least prostrating himself in ***heychal kodshecha***, the sanctuary of Your holiness, does not want to spoil his chances by having Doag and Achitofel punished on his account.

Abraham's outstanding virtue had been ***chessed***, loving kindness for his fellow human beings. He hated ***resha***, i.e. he hated to have the guilt of the wicked people on his conscience. David is afraid that he may not even enter the precincts of the righteous, (over which Abraham presides) far less the house of G'd.

David wants to enter the outer precincts of G'ds house, ***berov chassdecha*** due to an adequate supply of the attribute of ***chessed*** loving kindness. He is concerned lest Abraham the patron of ***chessed*** might object to his entering the celestial temple if he had not displayed the same characteristic in adequate fashion.

He is content to merely prostrate himself at the entrance of ***heychal kodshecha***, the sanctuary of Your holiness, wich privilege is due to the outstanding virtue of Isaac, i.e. ***pachad Yitzchak*** (reverence) here described as ***yiratecha***.

David is certain that Abraham would not oppose his entry due to the fact that these men have not been punished because of David. He also hopes that Isaac's merit will help him at least to prostrate himself at the entrance of the celestial inner sanctuary.

9O LORD, lead me along Your righteous [path] because of my watchful foes; make Your way straight before me.
10For there is no sincerity on their lips; their heart is [filled with] malice; their throat is an open grave; their tongue slippery.
11Condemn them, O God; let them fall by their own devices; cast them out for their many crimes, for they defy You.
12But let all who take refuge in You rejoice, ever jubilant as You shelter them; and let those who love Your name exult in You.

9. David is afraid that before that time arrives he may stumble on his path due to the sin he has committed, and especially so since he will be forced to engage fellow Jews in battle. Innocent Jews may be killed in such a battle due to him or even by him. I plead before You, says David, that the attribute which the patriarch Jacob was famous for, namely, his constant worry that he might inadvertently have sinned, would assist him. Compare Genesis 32,8 *Vayira vayetzer lo*, he was afraid and was chagrined, i.e. he was afraid he might be killed by Esau, or that he might have to kill Esau in self defense.

Therefore I plead "please G'd guide me in Your righteousness" so that I do not sin by killing Jews who face me since those who are with me encourage me to do so, i.e. *shoreray* based on the maxim that when someone plans to kill you, you should pre-empt them. (Sanhedrin 72) I want to follow YOUR attribute, namely to be patient with those who transgress. Make plain before me what is Your way in these circumstances.

10. David returns to the subject of "G'd detests a man who is deceitful and causes bloodshed", stating that the reason is *eyn befiyhu nechonah*, he does not have a sound basis for what his mouth utters. When David said to G'd *te-abed dovrey chazav*, destroy those who utter deceit, (verse 7) it was because the common denominator is *kirvam havot*, their insides are constantly plotting destruction= *havot*. The Talmud Chagigah 16 relates that Rav Yehudah was upset when he contemplated the fact that Doag and Achitofel, two outstanding Torah scholars were among those listed as not having a share in the hereafter. Shemuel explained to him that this was due to their Torah study having been flawed from the outset by impure intentions. This is what David means when he says *kirvam havot*. Their throat was like an open grave which emits the stench of the corpse.

ט יְהוָה נְחֵנִי בְצִדְקָתֶךָ לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרָי הַיְשַׁר לְפָנַי
דַּרְכֶּךָ׃
י כִּי אֵין בְּפִיהוּ נְכוֹנָה קִרְבָּם הַוּוֹת קֶבֶר־פָּתוּחַ גְּרוֹנָם
לְשׁוֹנָם יַחֲלִיקוּן׃
יא הַאֲשִׁימֵם אֱלֹהִים יִפְּלוּ מִמּוֹעֲצוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרֹב פִּשְׁעֵיהֶם
הַדִּיחֵמוֹ כִּי מָרוּ בָךְ׃
יב וְיִשְׂמְחוּ כָל־חוֹסֵי בָךְ לְעוֹלָם יְרַנֵּנוּ וְתָסֵךְ עֲלֵימוֹ
וְיַעְלְזוּ בְךָ אֹהֲבֵי שְׁמֶךָ׃

Their Torah was only from the tongue outwards. This is what the Talmud Chagigah refers to when it says *sifrey minim naflu mechaykam*, books of heresy fell from their bosoms. The "bosom", *cheyk* is a reference to the heart, the seat of our emotions.

11. Let them be their own accusers so that when they fall *yiplu*, it will be due to *moatzoteyhem*, their own counsels. They will slip, as happened to Achitofel (Samuel II 17,23) (in this case because his advice had been rejected)

People should learn that their OWN lips caused their downfall–, not mine. (says David).

12. When those who rebel against You fall,– all those who trust in You will rejoice forever.

Although we have the principle (Proverbs 24,17) that one must not rejoice at the fall of one's enemy, this principle applies only when the wickedness of the enemy was directed against the *tzaddik*. When it is directed against G'd,– the *tzaddikim* may, or rather should rejoice.

This is why David had stressed previously *asher maru bach* who have rebelled against You, i.e. against G'd. David adds "may their joy endure and not be cut short because they appear to transgress the admonition of Proverbs 24,17.

David says "Let them find their destruction, *elokim*, because of their sins against G'd, not because of their sins against me.

He also asks protection for those who *chossey bach* trust in You and rejoice when seeing the downfall of G'ds enemies. *tassech aleymo*, grant them protection from all troubles, so that the onlookers will not say that the reason these people "fell" was because they rejoiced over the downfall of Doag and Achitofel. Therefore, "those who love You shall exult!"

13 *For You surely bless the righteous man, O LORD, encompassing him with favor like a shield.*

6 1 *For the leader; with instrumental music on the* sheminith. *A psalm of David.*
2 *O LORD, do not punish me in anger, do not chastise me in fury.*

13. We know from Shemot Rabbah 42,5, that You will bless the righteous when You are *hashem*, i.e. when Your 4 lettered name is restored to common usage after You have taken revenge of Amalaek. This is what we know from Exodus 17,16 "as long as a hand is raised against the throne of the "2 lettered name of G'd", He is still embattled.

The righteous are content to suffer deprivations, knowing that G'd Himself undergoes "diminution" at the hands of Amalek.

All the righteous ask of G'd at this time is that You equip them from on high with the *ratzon*, the positive goodwill to tolerate the *yissurim*, afflictions they undergo in good cheer, so that they will not become "fed up" and turn to sin. *katzinah ratzon te-atrenu*, decorate them as if with a shield by granting them Your goodwill!

Psalms 6.

2. This Psalm was composed by David when he was sick in bed.

Before launching into our commentary let us remember that *af* is a term denoting fiercer anger than *chemah*. We have explained this in our commentary Rav Penimim on the verse (Exodus 32,13) "remember Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" and the question why all three patriarchs needed to be called upon by Moses. (compare Shemot Rabba 44,8).

We have explained in our commentary on Proverbs called *rav penimim*, that at the time the Jewish people committed the sin of the golden calf, G'd removed *af* from the Jewish people, whereas Moses succeeded in removing also the lesser degree of anger called *chemah*. The fact that the word *af* is masculine whereas the word *chemah* is feminine, supports the view that *chemah* is the lesser degree of anger.

In a similiar fashion, *yissurim* are a more potent form of affliction

יג כִּי-אַתָּה תְּבָרֵךְ צַדִּיק יְהוָה כַּצִּנָּה רָצוֹן תַּעְטְרֶנּוּ׃

ו א לַמְנַצֵּחַ בִּנְגִינוֹת עַל-הַשְּׁמִינִית מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד׃
ב יְהוָה אַל-בְּאַפְּךָ תוֹכִיחֵנִי וְאַל-בַּחֲמָתְךָ תְיַסְּרֵנִי׃

(the word being masculine) than are *tochachot*, a feminine, i.e. weaker version of disciplinary actions by G'd.

We have explained this in our commentary on Proverbs 3,11 "the discipline (mussar, i.e. *yissurim*) of the merciful G'd, do not despise my son, and do not loathe His admonitions!" Solomon refers to the severe afflictions by the term *me-iss*, something man despises, whereas the admontions which are easier to bear, he describes as *al takutz*, do not loathe. This means that though a person may attempt to escape those admonitions, they are not totally reviled by him.

Afflictions which do not prevent a person from engaging in Torah study or praying, are called *tochachah*, though they are commonly known as *yissurim shel ahava*, afflictions that attest to G'ds love for a person.

Those afflictions which prevent a person from engaging in Torah study or praying, are called *mussar*, and are due to the sins a person has committed.

Proverbs 3,12 continues "*ki et asher ye-ehav hashem yochiach* that G'd admonishes the person whom He loves". Solomon does NOT say *yeyasser* He disciplines severely. (Berachot 5).

While David was sick, he did not know if G'd meant to discipline him through his sickness and pain without letting him die, or whether the sickness was merely a prelude to death.

In either case, the circumstances were such that his afflictions could have been due to his sins, in which case they would be *yissurim*, or they could have merely reflected G'ds love for him, and should therefore be described as *tochachot*. (Talmud Shabbat 55 states that there are no *yissurim* which are not due to sin.) Either his sins had been purged from him due to the suffering he had experienced, or he could die while still a guilty person.

David addresses himself to these possibilities saying first "please Lord, do not let these afflictions be of the "af" kind if they are designed to demonstrate Your love for me, i.e. designed to wipe out any guilt of mine. Let them be of the *tochachah* kind.

Even if am to die,– the afflictions may cause me to die in a state

[3]Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I languish; heal me, O LORD, for my bones shake with terror.
[4]My whole being is stricken with terror, while You, LORD— O, how long!
[5]O LORD, turn! Rescue me! Deliver me as befits Your faithfulness.

of innocence, i.e. cleansed from any guilt by the suffering I have already experienced.

If these *yissurim* are due to Your love for me,– let them not be as a result of Your *af*, on the other hand if they are designed to cleanse me from guilt, let them not be from the *chemah* kind, *al bachamotcha teyassreni*, (since then the effect would be less) but let them be of the *af* kind which produces the *mussar*, disciplinary effect.

3. Since David has the feeling that these *yissurim* will not only be afflictions, but will result in his death, he asks G'd *Chaneni Hashem*, favour me O Lord, I am *umlall*, like a person who dies due to the *karet*penalty, i.e. both body and soul.

Concerning his soul, David asks *chaneni*, concerning his body, he asks *refa-eni*, heal me. The expression *chen* is used when there is no merit which can be called upon, such as in Exodus 33,19 "I will be gracious to whomever I choose to be gracious to". The Tanchuma Parshat Ki Tissa section 27, says, that G'd has a large reservoir of grace which He takes from to give to those who lack merits.

David prays for his body to be healed so that he can make amends for any harmful effects his sins have created.

To the enquiry whence he knew that not only his body was about to die, and that his soul had not been regenerated and become whole, David answers that his soul experiences greater *hitpa-alut*, excitement, emotion than his body. The degree of excitement of his body is only of the order *nivhalu atzamay*, my bones have become alarmed because they saw that they have not achieved their destiny, i.e. *kol atzmotay tomarnah Hashem mi kamocha* that all my bones should proclaim "who is like You O Lord"? (Psalms 35,10). David is careful NOT to say about his bones *nivhalu me-od*, they have become VERY alarmed.

4. Concerning his soul however, David says "she is VERY alarmed", meaning that he is upset that his soul lacks perfection. He uses the word *me-od*, very, to indicate his awareness that the whole universe stands and falls by the state of innocence of David's soul. When the Torah said in Genesis 1,31, "G'd saw all that He had made and it was

ג חָנֵּנִי יְהוָה כִּי אֻמְלַל אָנִי רְפָאֵנִי יְהוָה כִּי נִבְהֲלוּ
עֲצָמָי:
ד וְנַפְשִׁי נִבְהֲלָה מְאֹד וְאַתָּה יְהוָה עַד מָתָי:
ה שׁוּבָה יְהוָה חַלְּצָה נַפְשִׁי הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי לְמַעַן חַסְדֶּךָ:

VERY good", i.e. *tov me-od*, Bereshit Rabbah 8,5 understands the word *me-od* as referring to the soul of Adam.

Adam awaited his soul's regeneration through David, and if David did not accomplish this, he would be greatly upset, *nivhalah me-od* on account of Adam. David cannot acquiesce in departing this life without having accomplished his life's primary function at the end of the 70 years which were allocated to him by Adam for that purpose. (Bereshit Rabbah 12,6 or Shemot Rabbah 30,3).

We read there are "6 items which were ruined through Adam's sins will be restored to their original glory through *ben Peretz* = David=Messiah. It is David's task then to restore G'ds universe to its full original splendour.

Our sages in the same Midrash therefore conclude that whenever we read the words *eleh toldot*, these are the developments, the word *toldot* is spelled defective, indicating a deficiency in the developments about to be mentioned.

The exceptions are Genesis 2,4 "these are the developments, descendants of heaven and earth", and (Ruth 4,18) "these are the descendants of Peretz".

David asks G'd that if He would not grant him life for his own sake, He should do so, so that His (G'ds) name would be aggrandised in the futre, i.e. that Adam-David-Messiah are after all identical. *attah hashem*, You are Hashem, i.e. Adam had been the first creature to call You by that name (Bereshit Rabbah 17,4, based on Isaiah 42,8.)

Once G'd will be called again by His 4 lettered name, the one first used by Adam,– His universe is restored to its original glory. This is what David meant when he said *koss yeshuot essa*, "I will lift the chalice of salvations", (Psalms 117,13) describing the fact that *shem hashem ekra*, I will proclaim the 4 lettered name of the Lord.

He had ample reason to be upset then when taken ill in his prime, long before having achieved his task, and before turning 70. David refers to the anguish his bones experience because they would not be allowed to perform some *mitzvot*, Torah commandments, if their owner were to die at this time.

5. He calls on the 4 lettered name of G'd to return to "rescue my

6 *For there is no praise of You among the dead; in* Sheol,
who can acclaim You?
7 *I am weary with groaning; every night I drench my*
bed, I melt my couch in tears.
8 *My eyes are wasted by vexation, worn out because of all*
my foes.
9 *Away from me, all you evildoers, for the LORD heeds*
the sound of my weeping.
10 *The LORD heeds my plea, the LORD accepts my*
prayer.

soul". Since David's soul is inextricably linked to G'd Himself, G'ds re-emergence in full glory will automatically be a *yeshuah* salvation for it. In other words, "Your return results in *hoshi-eyni* my salvation. I ask that You do this for the sake of Your kindness, i.e. mercy, since I am not worthy", says David.

6. Another reason not to let me die from this illness, is related to a story in the Talmud Chagigah 27. We are told that the fires of purgatory have no control over Torah scholars. It is further related in Chagigah 16, that when the erstwhile scholar Elishah ben Avuyah who had turned heretic, died, they said (in the celestial court) NOT to judge him (in purgatory), since he had studied Torah. On the other hand, he was not to enter *olam haba*, the world to come either etc.

The same would apply in even greater measure to David who is described in Samuel II 23,8 as *adino ha-etzni*, a reference to David's prowess when studying Torah. (compare Rashi there, as well as Moed Katan 16– which describes David the *adino ha-etzni* as being as humble as a worm when studying Torah, while being tough as timber when going into battle.).

David, therefore says that since he does not belong to the category over which the fires of purgatory excercise control, his death, i.e. his punishment as a sinner would not contribute to the reputation of G'd. Our sages (Eyruvin 19) state that the praise of G'd which emanates from *gehinnom*, purgatory is greater than that which emanates from *gan eden*, i.e. the realm of the righteous in the hereafter.

(When the wicked acknowledges G'ds justice, having been chastised in purgatory, this does more for G'ds image than when the righteous sing His praises).

David therefore says that since he will NOT end up in purgatory, how could aknowledging G'd from *she-ol*=the grave *odeh lach*, benefit G'ds image amongst manking? Only if he died AFTER having

ו כִּי אֵין בַּמָּוֶת זִכְרֶךָ בִּשְׁאוֹל מִי יוֹדֶה-לָּךְ:
ז יָגַעְתִּי בְאַנְחָתִי אַשְׂחֶה בְכָל-לַיְלָה מִטָּתִי בְּדִמְעָתִי
עַרְשִׂי אַמְסֶה:
ח עָשְׁשָׁה מִכַּעַס עֵינִי עָתְקָה בְּכָל-צוֹרְרָי:
ט סוּרוּ מִמֶּנִּי כָּל-פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן כִּי-שָׁמַע יְהוָה קוֹל בִּכְיִי:
י שָׁמַע יְהוָה תְּחִנָּתִי יְהוָה תְּפִלָּתִי יִקָּח:

completed his soul's mission could his death contribute to G'ds image!

7. Have I not studied Torah to exhaustion, has not my whole *yegi-ah*, exertion been for Torah even when *anchoti*, I sighed, i.e. suffered pain every night, my entire conversation is Torah! Therefore, purgatory has no power over me. To the query how I will rid myself of my sins then, David replies that starting now, he floods his bedstead with tears.

8. If G'd were to ask "why did you not weep tears up to now as you are promising to do from now on?" David replies that his eye had become dry due to his heated anger; it has rotted *ashasha*. My enemies did not give me time, it (the eye) aged, *atka* (from the root *atikin*). NOW that my oppressors have given me respite, I can start crying.

9. Therefore I plead– depart from me all workers of violence! since G'd has hearkened to the sound of my weeping, i.e. to the promise I made to weep before Him every night.

10. If someone were to say "since you have not wept YET, how can G'd take action already now?" David says that this is not surprising. Just as G'd can listen to prayers that have not been verbalised as yet, He can listen to tears that have not been shed as yet. (compare Isaiah 65,24.)

G'd has meanwhile heard *techinati*, my supplication, and afterwards *yikach tefilati* He will accept my prayer. My prayer will not be a burden to Him since He has already accepted. it. (compare our commetary on Isaiah 65,24.)

This is similar to Psalms 21,3 "You have not withheld from His the request of his lips,– though You had already granted the desire of his heart."

Another view of verse 9–10 could be this. We know the statement of Rabbi Yochanan (Avodah Zarah 4) that "David was not really morally capable of committing adultery. It was allowed to happen only to demonstrate to other lesser individuals the power of

[11]*All my enemies will be frustrated and stricken with terror; they will turn back in an instant, frustrated.*

7 [1]Shiggaion *of David, which he sang to the LORD, concerning Cush a Benjaminite.*
[2]*O LORD, my God, in You I seek refuge; deliver me from all my pursuers and save me,*
[3]*lest, like a lion, they tear me apart, rending in pieces, and no one save me.*
[4]*O LORD, my God, if I have done such things, if my hands bear the guilt of wrongdoing,*

genuine repentance." A person should not think that his sin is beyond G'ds ability to forgive and therefore have no more moral incentive to live a pure life.

David tells such people "forsake evil,– see that G'd has accepted my weeping"! He will do the same for you also, should the need arise. In fact, He will show you increased favour if you do penitence for your sins. Proof is the fact that He heard my pleas, though I verbalised them only afterwards.

11. By Your making me well and restoring me to life, may all my enemies be shamed and alarmed very much. May their faces turn green. The reason I said they should become alarmed is, that if their shame does NOT cause them to repent immediately.

If they do, I will not hate them, but love them, and not even wish their shame to last more than a moment, i.e. *yashuvu– yevoshu rega*, if they repent they will suffer shame only for a moment. All I want is that their shame will trigger their repentance.

Psalm 7.

1. An error. An illusion. When David was being pursued by king Saul, he had demonstrated his loyalty to Saul by not killing Saul but rather by cutting off a corner of Saul's cloak and pointing out to Saul that he had done so although he had a chance to kill him. (Samuel I chapter 24.) At that time, after Saul's apology, he had promised not to lay a hand on Saul's family.

When this had happened, instead of giving Saul credit for his change of heart– David had sung the praises of G'd for his deliverance, thanking Him for having placed the right words in his mouth. (Samuel II chapter 22)

יא יֵבֹשׁוּ וְיִבָּהֲלוּ מְאֹד כָּל-אֹיְבָי יָשֻׁבוּ יֵבֹשׁוּ רָגַע׃

ז א שִׁגָיוֹן לְדָוִד אֲשֶׁר-שָׁר לַיהוָה עַל-דִּבְרֵי-כוּשׁ בֶּן-יְמִינִי׃

ב יְהוָה אֱלֹהַי בְּךָ חָסִיתִי הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִכָּל-רֹדְפַי וְהַצִּילֵנִי׃

ג פֶּן-יִטְרֹף כְּאַרְיֵה נַפְשִׁי פֹּרֵק וְאֵין מַצִּיל׃

ד יְהוָה אֱלֹהַי אִם-עָשִׂיתִי זֹאת אִם-יֶשׁ-עָוֶל בְּכַפָּי׃

Our sages, in Moed Katan 16, have described *kush* as an example of a person who is unable to change his character, just as a negro (*kushi*) is unable to change the colour of his skin. (Samuel II 22,18)

He would maintain his hostile attitude– though he is a descendant of Benjamin, an example of a saintly character.

2. Even though Saul had spoken kindly to David on that occasion, David says that he would not rely on this, but *Hashem elokay becha chassiti*, I put my trust only in You my G'd.

I am not really afraid of Saul per se, says David, seeing that he is a righteous person, but of his entourage who are *kol rodfay* all pursuing me, such as Doag and the Siphim (Samuel I 23,19) who incite Saul against me. This is what David means when he says *hoshi -eyni*, rescue me from all those who pursue me.

Should one point out that after all when it came to the crunch, Saul had spoken to David like father to son, David says *hatzileyni*, save me from him also!.

3. True, says David, when I was able to convince him as I did by cutting off a piece of his cloak without harming him, he was willing to be reconciled with me, but I am afraid that on some other occasion he might suddenly snatch my soul like a lion who carries away the prey when there is no one around to confront him and make him desist.

At such time,– *eyn matzil* there would be no one around to rescue me.

4. If G'd were to criticize David saying "you have cut the corner of the cloak of the *mashiach hashem*, the anointed one of G'd, and therefore you are in line for some punishment and that this constitutes an impediment to My saving you, "David offers contrite apologies. (According to Berachot 62, he had been punished, as is explained by Rabbi Yossi based on Kings (I, 1,1.) David says *im yesh*

5*if I have dealt evil to my ally, I who rescued my foe without reward*
6*then let the enemy pursue and overtake me; let him trample my life to the ground, and lay my body in the dust.*
7*Rise, O LORD, in Your anger; assert Yourself against the fury of my foes; bestir Yourself on my behalf; You have ordained judgment.*
8*Let the assembly of peoples gather about You, with You entrhoned above, on high.*
9*The LORD judges the peoples; vindicate me, O LORD, for the righteousness and blamelessness that are mine.*
10*Let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; he who probes the mind and conscience is God the righteous.*

avel bekappi, if indeed I have sinned I did not do so with my heart or soul, but only ***bechapay*** with my hand (the fact that my hands cut the cloak)

5. Besides, even if I did pay Saul back with evil, the fact is that he had repaid me with evil for good. (after what I had done for him) Besides, had I let my oppressors go scot free, i.e. ***reykam***, instead of at least cutting off the corner of his cloak, the enemy was about to pursue my soul.

6. David explains that had he allowed Saul to try and kill him, he would have had to defend himself and kill Saul and/or his men, in which event ***veyasseg veyirmoss laaretz chayay***, or he would have killed me body and soul, or I would have demeaned my kingdom, and been as low as the dust ***afar*** forever.

He, (Saul or his avenger) would not have rested till he would have caused me to sin and die as a result of committing such a travesty against the anointed one of G'd. (compare Abigail's advice to David in Samuel I chapter 25)

Therefore, David concludes, it was better that I cut off a corner of Saul's cloak which resulted in his conciliatory remarks.

7. David had no doubt that G'ds fiery anger was directed at ***tzorreray*** those who pursue me. However, he did not want them to be punished on his account. (as we have explained previously, Proverbs 17,26) Therefore he asks G'd ***kumah***! arise ***hinasseh be-avrot*** read ***averot*** sins, lift Yourself up due to the iniquities of my oppressors. ***urah elay mishpat***, awaken for me judgment (justice)

ה אִם-גָּמַלְתִּי שׁלְמִי רָע וָאֲחַלְּצָה צוֹרְרִי רֵיקָם:
ו יְרַדֹּף אוֹיֵב נַפְשִׁי וְיַשֵּׂג וְיִרְמֹס לָאָרֶץ חַיָּי וּכְבוֹדִי
לֶעָפָר יַשְׁכֵּן סֶלָה:
ז קוּמָה יְהוָה בְּאַפֶּךָ הִנָּשֵׂא בְּעַבְרוֹת צוֹרְרָי וְעוּרָה אֵלַי
מִשְׁפָּט צִוִּיתָ:
ח וַעֲדַת לְאֻמִּים תְּסוֹבְבֶךָּ וְעָלֶיהָ לַמָּרוֹם שׁוּבָה:
ט יְהוָה יָדִין עַמִּים שָׁפְטֵנִי יְהוָה כְּצִדְקִי וּכְתֻמִּי עָלָי:
י יִגְמָר-נָא רַע רְשָׁעִים וּתְכוֹנֵן צַדִּיק וּבֹחֵן לִבּוֹת
וּכְלָיוֹת אֱלֹהִים צַדִּיק:

since their sins have turned into accusers against them, something which will cause them to perish.

This is similar to Isaiah 64,6 "you have caused us to melt on account of our sins". David expects the promise of G'd in Psalm 2,8 "ask Me and I let the nations of the world be your inheritance" to be fulfilled. Since we have a tradition that G'ds anger once aroused does not abate without accomplishing something, (Exodus 4,14 see Rashi), David suggests that G'ds anger be turned against the idol worshipping nations. (We explained in chapter 2 that Abraham had prevented David's universal role as Messiah and destroyer of the blaspheming nations from being fulfilled at this time.)

8. David requests that the nations surround G'd., i.e. gang up on Him saying that David's misfortunes are due to G'ds doing. (not theirs) This will then afford G'd an opportunity to rise heavenward, *aleyah lamorom*, to mobilise celestial forces against the nations to pour out G'ds wrath over them, the wrath which had originally been directed at Israel. We have already mentioned on Psalm 2.2, that this request of David's was not granted.

9. When G'd judges the other nations, He will judge me in accordance with my righteousness, seeing that every *mitzvah*, meritorious deed, creates an angel, i.e. a positive force. (Avot 4,11) At that time my deeds can be compared to theirs.

But now I do not want You to compare my righteousness with that of Saul. This because the Talmud had pointed out that as a person Saul was superior to David. (Moed Katan 16.)

10. My request concerning two categories of Jews is along the line of what we learned in Berachot 10: "When Rabbi Meir was being harassed by scoffers etc, he asked G'd to let them die. His wife

11I look to God to shield me; the deliverer of the upright.
12God vindicates the righteous; God pronounces doom each day.
13If one does not turn back, but whets his sword, bends his bow and aims it,
14then against himself he readies deadly weapons, and makes his arrows sharp.
15See, he hatches evil, conceives mischief, and gives birth to fraud.
16He has dug a pit and deepened it, and will fall into the trap he made.
17His mischief will recoil upon his own head; his lawlessness will come down upon his skull.

Beruriah queried his right to do so quoting Psalms 104,35" the ***chata-im*** will cease to exist". It does not say that the ***chot-im***, sinners will cease to exist. Besides, the verse goes on to say "there will be no more wicked people". Surely this cannot be accomplished by their deaths! Rather, Beruriah told Rabbi Meir to pray for the scoffers to do ***teshuvah***, repentance.

In the same vein, David here asks that the "evil that the wicked do shall cease", i.e. that they should do penitence, and that the negative forces created by their sins as well as his own sins, should be neutralised by the repentance of their perpetrators. He adds ***techonen***, establish firmly him who is a ***tzaddik***– be it myself or Saul–.

I say this because I do NOT consider myself more righteous than he (Saul). After all, adds David, only G'd who examines the heart and the kidney of people is able to know who is a true ***tzaddik***.

11. Anyone who hears me say this should not think that these are empty phrases, and that in my heart I am convinced that I am the ***tzaddik***. Since I trust G'd in my heart that He is my shield and helps those who are of pure heart, how could I dare say one thing and think something else in my heart? He helps only those who are ***yishrey lev***, of sincere heart!

12. The fact that I constantly suffer pursuit in broad daylight, i.e. ***bechol yom***, the whole day long, is NOT sign that I am NOT righteous; it is because it is G'ds nature to constantly judge the righteous by subjecting him to ***yissurim*** afflictions.

The fact that He does not discipline me with afflictions once and

יא מָגִנִּי עַל-אֱלֹהִים מוֹשִׁיעַ-יִשְׁרֵי לֵב:
יב אֱלֹהִים שׁוֹפֵט צַדִּיק וְאֵל זֹעֵם בְּכָל-יוֹם:
יג אִם-לֹא יָשׁוּב חַרְבּוֹ יִלְטוֹשׁ קַשְׁתּוֹ דָרַךְ וַיְכוֹנְנֶהָ:
יד וְלוֹ הֵכִין כְּלֵי-מָוֶת חִצָּיו לְדֹלְקִים יִפְעָל:
טו הִנֵּה יְחַבֵּל-אָוֶן וְהָרָה עָמָל וְיָלַד שָׁקֶר:
טז בּוֹר כָּרָה וַיַּחְפְּרֵהוּ וַיִּפֹּל בְּשַׁחַת יִפְעָל:
יז יָשׁוּב עֲמָלוֹ בְרֹאשׁוֹ וְעַל קָדְקָדוֹ חֲמָסוֹ יֵרֵד:

for all, but spreads these afflictions, i.e. a little every day,– is part of His kindness. In this way He helps me bear these afflictions.

Or,– (as in Jeremiah 46,28), when the prophet explains to Israel that the afflictions that occur piecemeal are in lieu of extinction. G'd, the only ONE who qualifies for the term *tzaddik*, the truly righteous one, ensures my survival by *zoem bechol yom*, making His anger felt daily. This is an act of kindness by G'd.

13. If such a person – for whose repentance I have prayed, will not do penitence, then he whets his sword, i.e. the sword which will eventually kill him, and he bends his own bow to hasten his demise.

14. Such a person had already prepared the instruments of his death previously, i.e. *velo hechin kley mavet*. Only now he has accelerated *chitzav ledolkim yifal*, he activates his arrows against himself. (not against me, says David).

15. He cannot be trusted merely on his assurance that he will no longer pursue me. Having once commenced an evil path, i.e. *yechabel aven*, he is set to carry out his iniquity. (if he did not repent) The example is the tribe of the *Zippim*. (Samuel I 26) David was afraid that though Saul might not actively pursue him, he would not resist what would appear an easy way to capture David. (Samuel I 23,25)

Having once set out on a path of *amal*, trouble, one cannot have faith in his words, he will produce falsehood, i.e. not honour his promise. (This is why David remained with the Philistines instead of returning to Israel proper even though Saul no longer actively pursued him. Ed.)

16. The instruments of death of which I have said in verse 14 that he had prepared them for his own death, are "the pit he dug", i.e. the slander against me which he accepted without proof concerning the city of priests Nof. (Samuel I, 22, 9–19) By digging this pit, i.e. killing the priests in that town, *vayipol beshachat yiphal*, he has fallen into the ditch he wanted to prepare.

17. His trouble will return on his own head, i.e. he will be killed on

18 *I will praise the LORD for His righteousness, and sing*
a hymn to the name of the LORD Most High.

8 1 *For the leader; on the* gittith. *A psalm of David.*
2 *O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name*
throughout the earth, You who have covered the heavens
with Your splendor!

account of that sin. Since the source of genetic transfer emanates in the ***kodkod***, brain, and one imparts traits to one's offspring, 3 of Saul's sons were killed through his father's sin. (source unknown) (Samuel I 31,2). The sin of unwarranted violence is what is referred to.

18. Since it is clearly impossible to thank the Lord for all the matters that we should thank Him for, let me at least thank Him for all the righteousness He has done with me. Also, I will sing the praise of the supreme G'd, who is quite unlike a human king whose name is nothing but a title.

Not so in the case of G'd whose very name is something superior. (Berachot 33) The Talmud discusses the right of a person to describe G'ds attributes without scriptural precedence for such names. Rabbi Chanina illustrates this by saying that if a human king owned 100 talents of gold and would be described as owning a great deal of silver, surely this would not be a form of praise!

Psalm 8.

2. Our sages are agreed that this verse was spoken by the ministering angels (Shabbat 88), when they requested that the Torah be given to them. We need to understand what prompted these angels to ask to be given the Torah (written Torah). They certainly would not be able to fulfil its precepts according to the plain meaning i.e. ***peshat***, seeing they have no bodies, and the precepts are addressed in the main to the bodies of the recipients.

If, on the other hand, it was only the mystical part of the Torah the angels wanted, i.e. the name of the Almighty– why was it not given to them? After all, they possess tremendous spiritual stature!? This especially, since G'd gave man, the body equipped creature the Torah as a matter of course!

This hymn can be understood once we understand the apparently superfluous words ***asher tenah hodcha al hashamayim*** in this verse.

יח אוֹדֶה יְהוָה כְּצִדְקוֹ וַאֲזַמְּרָה שֵׁם-יְהוָה עֶלְיוֹן:

ח

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-הַגִּתִּית מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
ב יְהוָה אֲדֹנֵינוּ מָה-אַדִּיר שִׁמְךָ בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-תְּנָה
הוֹדְךָ עַל-הַשָּׁמָיִם:

Another difficulty is the connection between this verse and the opening of verse 3 *mipi ollelim*, out of the mouth of babes. Besides, how can *oz*, might, be rooted in "the mouths of sucklings"? After all, these "sucklings" cannot even use their mouths to speak as yet! What does the word *oyev* enemy and the *mitnakem*, the avenger have to do in this context? (verse 3)

Furthermore, verse 4 seems neither a continuation of verse 3 nor a prelude to verse 5! The words *mah enosh ki tizkerenu* who is man that You should consider him, should have followed verse 2, i.e. right after the comments of the *malachey hasharet*, the ministering angels. Besides, what is meant (verse 6) by *vatachserey-hu me-at me-elokim*, You have made him only a little short of being like G'd?

We know from Rosh Hashana 21, that that latter comment was applied to Moses, who attained 49 out of the 50 *sha-arey binah* intellectual endowments that exist. Why, in verse 8, when man's authority over the creatures of the universe is outlined, are only sheep, cattle, fish and fowl mentioned? Why would the Psalmist mention "he strides over the oceans", and in the singular, i.e. 'over' at that?!

The fact is that there is a difference of opinions concerning man's status in the universe.

One school of thought believes the soul to be of Divine origin, an integral part of G'd, even though it has been surrounded by G'd with flesh and skin. Therefore, according to that view, the fact that the soul is encased in a body does not stop man from being superior to the ministering angels; at least the righteous people who also happen to be Jews.

The second school of thought holds that, granted that the soul is part of the Divine, man is inferior to the ministering angels, since his soul has been inextricably fused to a body, the angels on the other hand, being purely spiritual beings.

A third view holds that though man is inferior to the angels, he is superior to the world of galaxies. (outer space) Some scholars hold

[3]*From the mouths of infants and sucklings You have founded strength on account of Your foes, to put an end to enemy and avenger.*

that man is inferior even to the world of galaxies, the latter enduring forever.

A fourth view is that man is not even superior to the animals, *umotar ha-adam min habe-heyma ayin*, seeing that both species die. This group of philosophers does not view man's soul as a separate spiritual entity, but identifies it merely with the life force of the beast, which disintegrates the moment the body disintegrates.

The true Jewish viewpoint is the first school of thought, namely that the stature of the righteous is greater than that of the ministering angels. We find this view not only in the Zohar 14, but in Bereshit Rabba 78,1 and several other sources.

The discussion centers around the question of the relative merit of the *shomer*, guardian and the item to be guarded the *nishmar*. (compare Psalms 91,11 *ki malachay yetzaveh lach lishmarcha*, for His angels He commands to guard you.

Also Psalms 91, 12, states "they carry you on their hands" referring to the angels carrying the Jewish people. The angels then, as servants of the Jewish people, clearly are inferior.

The question is also asked as to who is greater, "the one who grants permission, or the one from whom permission must be obtained"? The sages quote Genesis 32, 37 "let me go for dawn has risen", as an example of the angel having to obtain permission from Jacob/Israel to leave earth, showing that the angel is subordinate to Jacob.

From the examples quoted it is clear that in each case the human being had been superior to the angel. There are numerous instances when our sages have made it plain that man – when he achieves his potential – is superior to angels. Were it not so, it would make no sense for the Midrash (Bereshit Rabba 78) to describe Jacob's arrival in *eretz yisrael* as taking place to the accompaniment of 1,200000 angels. Also, Jacob's ability to despatch angels as his messengers to Esau, clearly demonstrates that Jacob is viewed as superior. (Genesis 32,4)

However, against this we have the dream of Jacob depicting the angels as climbing and descending the ladder respectively. (Genesis 28,12). This merely means that the relative stature of the angels as below man or above man depends on man's actions.

David, equipped with the holy spirit, wants to rebut the second

ג מִפִּי עוֹלְלִים וְיוֹנְקִים יִסַּדְתָּ עֹז לְמַעַן צוֹרְרֶיךָ
לְהַשְׁבִּית אוֹיֵב וּמִתְנַקֵּם׃

school of thought mentioned earlier which views man as inferior to the angels either occasionally or altogether.

He begins by addressing the second school of thought. The angels say to G'd, *Hashem adoneynu*, i.e. this appellation is Your glory, *mah adir shimcha*, to be called OUR Lord, and not merely the Lord of physical creatures. You do not need to spread Your reputation on earth, You have already done so once, when you orchestrated the Exodus from Egypt.

Rather, give the Torah to US, not to physical creatures. Even though the plain meaning of the Torah, the *peshat* is directed at man, the part that WE ask You to give to US is the *sod* = *hodcha*, that which reflects Your majesty.

What the angels wanted was that man would receive only the dimension of the Torah they considered suitable for terrestrial beings. Obviously, the angels were convinced that theirs was a superior spiritual level.

3. David answers, "You G'd have built strength on the mouths of sucklings and children to enable us to triumph over them". *Ollelim* is a term used for babies who have been weaned, (Lamentations 4,4) "*Ollelim* ask for bread". During the first 24 months of their lives however, these children are called *yonkim*, sucklings.

We have the tradition that while in Egypt, G'd took care of these sucklings underground. (Sotah 11). Shemot Rabba 1, 12, describes that the pregnant Jewish mothers, afraid that the Egyptians would drown their male babies, wandered into the fields before giving birth. The Jewish infants were fed milk and honey subterraneously, and when they emerged after 24 months, each recognised his father. These are the people who were able to point to the *Shechinah*, Divine presence in the song after having crossed the sea of reeds. They sang "this is my G'd and I will glorify Him", (Exodus 15,2) since they had previously been granted a visual image of the "shechinah" while they had been sucklings. The image that they had seen was of a pure and red appearance. (so far the Midrash)

The angels had been aware of this. We have no better argument against the angels, since, though they are totally spiritual beings, they DO NOT see an image of G'd. In fact they keep asking *ayeh mekom kevodo*, where is the site of His glory? (Yalkut Ezekiel 354) Man in his proper state then is superior to the angels and deserves to receive the Torah in all its dimensions.

4When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
the moon and stars that You set in place,
5what is man that You have been mindful of him,
mortal man that You have taken note of him,
6that You have made him little less than divine, and
adorned him with glory and majesty;
7You have made him master over Your handiwork, laying
the world at his feet,
8sheep and oxen, all of them, and wild beasts, too;
9the birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, whatever
travels the paths of the seas.
10O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name
throughout the earth!

The mouths of those, who while *yonkim*, sucklings received this personalised attention by G'd,– were the first to recognise G'd during the miraculous crossing of the sea. They realised that G'd was taking revenge on those who had oppressed them. Their open admiration of G'd helped paralyze the enemy, i.e. *le-hashbit* and to take revenge of him. (Yalkut Shemot 247–248)

4. Another proof of the superiority of man over angels, is the fact that the entire physical universe was created for the sake of man, i.e. "so that I could see Your heavens etc". All the phenomena we see in the sky and on earth, are designed to enable us to navigate, plan crops etc. etc. Surely this proves that we are greatly superior to animals. Surely the Creator would not have orchestrated all this merely for the sake of creating something as inferior as the animal kingdom.

5. Since man WITHOUT his soul would certainly NOT warrant all this effort on his behalf by His Creator, not even for the relatively advanced human being, i.e. *ben adam*, clearly it is his soul which makes him so superior.

6. A gentile once enquired about the meaning of "for amongst all the wise men of the nations, no one is like Him" (Jeremiah 10,7). He wanted to know if the prophet implied that amongst Israel– as opposed to the nations,– there are people whose wisdom compares to that of G'd. (could anyone who commanded sun and moon to arrest their orbits compare to G'ds wisdom? Joshuah 10,12.)

Or, is the fact that numerous people are reported to have succeeded instantly in producing rain when there was need for it,

ד כִּי-אֶרְאֶה שָׁמֶיךָ מַעֲשֵׂה אֶצְבְּעֹתֶיךָ יָרֵחַ וְכוֹכָבִים
אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנָנְתָּה:
ה מָה-אֱנוֹשׁ כִּי-תִזְכְּרֶנּוּ וּבֶן-אָדָם כִּי תִפְקְדֶנּוּ:
ו וַתְּחַסְּרֵהוּ מְעַט מֵאֱלֹהִים וְכָבוֹד וְהָדָר תְּעַטְּרֵהוּ:
ז תַּמְשִׁילֵהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ כֹּל שַׁתָּה תַּחַת-רַגְלָיו:
ח צֹנֶה וַאֲלָפִים כֻּלָּם וְגַם בַּהֲמוֹת שָׂדָי:
ט צִפּוֹר שָׁמַיִם וּדְגֵי הַיָּם עֹבֵר אָרְחוֹת יַמִּים:
י יְהוָה אֲדֹנֵינוּ מָה-אַדִּיר שִׁמְךָ בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ:

proof that there are Jews who have at their disposal wisdom similar to that of G'd?

The gentile was told that a Jew is only slightly inferior in wisdom to G'd (Zohar).

Not only does G'd NOT MIND doing the wishes of the *tzaddikim*, righteous, but He feels HONOURED, i.e. His own reputation is enhanced when He responds in such fashion to those who truly revere Him.

7. David now explains what man's inferiority to G'd consists of. Concerning control of heaven and earth, You G'd may have made them, (Isaiah 48,13), but You have appointed man to be in control of it. (Like Rabbi Chaninah in Taanit 25, "He who told oil to burn can also tell vinegar to burn. (i.e. give light). We are told that Rabbi Chaninah ben Dotha could work miracles at will. (this means to command G'd to change the laws of nature)

8–9. You could reply that all this does not help us when we look around and observe how low and despised Jews have become, and how powerless they are in while in exile. David says that the time will come when wolf and sheep will dwell peacefully together. (Isaiah 11,6). At that time "sheep and cattle, as well as the beasts of the field, will be together. The birds of the heaven, i.e. the ministering angels which are here described as "heaven", as well as the angels, here described as *degey hayam*, the fish of the sea, as well as Leviathan, which traverses the sea lanes, *orchot yamim* will all confess, calling the Lord "OUR Master".

10. Having proven that man is the central creature in the universe, we find that the angels were wrong when THEY said "the Lord is OUR Master etc.", believing that such appellation of G'd was appropriate only vis a vis them and not vis a vis man, and that it

9 [1]*For the leader;* almuth labben. *A psalm of David.*
[2]*I will praise You, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell all Your wonders.*
[3]*I will rejoice and exult in You, singing a Hymn to Your name, O Most High.*
[4]*When my enemies retreat, they stumble to their doom at Your presence.*

would not contribute to G'ds glory to be known as the *adon*, master of physical creatures. The real *adir shimcha*, mightiness of Your name, is when it will be acknowledged *bechol ha-aretz* all over EARTH!

Psalm 9.

1. Midrash Tehillim as well as Yalkut Shimoni 643, explain that as long as the first child of Bat Sheva was alive, David knew that G'd had not yet forgiven him. Once the child had died, David took it as a sign that his sin had been forgiven. Hence there was a reason to compose this hymn in gratitude for the pardon that he had experienced.

All this is reflected in the expression *moot laben*, instead of *moot haben*, the death of the son. Had he said *moot haben*, the hymn would have to be viewed as a lament rather than as a Psalm of gratitude. (compare Samuel II, chapter 12).

Alternatively, although an untoward event such as the loss of a son can indicate that G'd has forgiven a person a sin he had committed, having exacted retribution, the appropriate benediction *baruch dayan ha-emet*, blessed the true judge, is often NOT recited with the same fervour with which one recites the benediction *she-hecheyanu*, who has kept us alive, when an obviously pleasant event has occurred. (compare Berachot 54: a person is obligated to bless the Lord for the *ra-ah*, the unpleasant, in the same manner as he blesses the Lord for the *tov*, the apparently good). The scriptural proof cited is "you shall love the Lord Your G'd with all your heart". David fulfilled this requirement to the full, as we know from Samuel II, 12, 20 "as soon as David realised the child had died,... he washed, changed his clothes, went to the tabernacle and prayed, came home, asked that a meal be served, and ate'. (compare the amazement of his servants and the ensuing dialogues in verses 21–23) Composition of this hymn is proof that David could view himself as "victor", i.e. *lamenatzeach* in his reaction to the death of his son.

ט א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל מוּת לַבֵּן מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
ב אוֹדֶה יְהוָה בְּכָל לִבִּי אֲסַפְּרָה כָּל-נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ:
ג אֶשְׂמְחָה וְאֶעֱלְצָה בָךְ אֲזַמְּרָה שִׁמְךָ עֶלְיוֹן:
ד בְּשׁוּב אוֹיְבַי אָחוֹר יִכָּשְׁלוּ וְיֹאבְדוּ מִפָּנֶיךָ:

2. Because this event afforded me an opportunity to demonstrate that I can bless the Lord for *ra-ah*, a painful experience in the same way as I bless Him for *tovah*, joyful experiences, "I thank the Lord with all my heart" I am different in this respect from anyone else, in that I feel genuinely happy, because I had two worries.

Firstly, I worried about the death of my body, secondly, about the possible loss of my share in the hereafter, on account of the *chillul hashem* desecration of the Lord's name, that my sin had entailed. Now that I know I have been forgiven, I am able to tell all Your wonderful works throughout my life, in all my hymns.

3. I also will have a share in the hereafter, will not forfeit it through the desecration of G'ds name I have been guilty of, since I have now been punished. (in this world) I know I will rejoice and jubilate *boch*, with You, i.e. in the hereafter. I will also merit the privilege of singing Your name while I am *elyon*, i.e. "above". We have explained, based on Eyruvin 19 and Shemot Rabba 87,4 that "more praises of the Lord emanate from *gehinnom*, purgatory than emanate from *gan eden*, the abode of the souls of the righteous.

David says that had he been consigned to purgatory, he most certainly would have acclaimed the fairness of G'ds justice from there. Now that he is *elyon*, above, (not "below" in purgatory), he will certainly jubilate and sing to G'ds name.

4. I had been guilty of death. Although, when I acknowledged my sin (Samuel II, 12, 13) the prophet Nathan had told me "G'd has forgiven your sin, you will not die... however the son that will be born you will die", I did not know that the son would die as my atonement. Now I realise that my son died as atonement. My enemy now has to retract, i.e. *beshuv oyvay achor*, what they had said at first, when they asked me the appropriate punishment of an adulterer.

Since my enemies do not accept Your judgment of my sin (Baba Metziah 59), and demand my death, *yikashlu*, let them stumble and perish from Your Presence, i.e. may they lose their share in the hereafter. (since their public shaming of me deserves no better).

[5]*For You uphold my right and claim, enthroned as righteous judge.*
[6]*You blast the nations; You destroy the wicked; You blot out their name forever.*
[7]*The enemy is no more — ruins everlasting; You have torn down their cities; their very names are lost.*
[8]*But the LORD abides forever; He has set up His throne for judgment;*
[9]*it is He who judges the world with righteousness, rules the peoples with equity.*

5. This is so, because Your judgment of me was based upon my own judgment of myself, when I said that a person committing a sin similar to that described by the prophet Nathan, deserves to die. (Samuel II, 12 2–5)

After that, You changed my sentence to make my son die, so that no guilt of death remained for me. Nathan himself told me "you will not die, but your son". ibid.

One cannot argue that You in Your attribute of mercy have decided to overlook my sin. Our sages (Yalkut Shimoni Job 893, on Job 1,21) "the Lord has given AND the Lord has taken, may the name of the Lord be blessed", explain as follows.

When G'd gives, He does not consult with His celestial Court. When He takes away, He consults first; this is why it says "And The Lord has taken". (compare our commentary on Psalms 2, and 12,13.).

My enemies therefore had no right to claim that the fact I did not die constitutes an act of grace by G'd rather than the result of an act of justice. I am no longer in line for further punishment for that sin. This is what David means when he says "when You carried out my judgment, You sat (presided) on the throne of the fair judge".

6. The argument that a child who had been conceived in sin and subsequently died, did NOT atone for his father, and that therefore there is still an opening for the attribute of justice to decree David's death, does not hold.

After all, the celestial Court sometimes converts death sentences which appear to be called for, as was the case for instance, with the generation of the people of the tower of Babel, people who had actively attempted to make war against G'd. G'd had settled for dispersing the people and changing their once unified language. (Genesis 11)

Ga-arta goyim, You were angry at them, whereas during the generation of the deluge, ***ibadta rasha***, You destroyed the wicked,

ה כִּי-עָשִׂיתָ מִשְׁפָּטִי וְדִינִי יָשַׁבְתָּ לְכִסֵּא שֹׁפֵט צֶדֶק:
ו גָּעַרְתָּ גּוֹיִם אִבַּדְתָּ רָשָׁע שְׁמָם מָחִיתָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:
ז הָאוֹיֵב תַּמּוּ חֳרָבוֹת לָנֶצַח וְעָרִים נָתַשְׁתָּ אָבַד זִכְרָם
הֵמָּה:
ח וַיהוָה לְעוֹלָם יֵשֵׁב כּוֹנֵן לַמִּשְׁפָּט כִּסְאוֹ:
ט וְהוּא יִשְׁפֹּט-תֵּבֵל בְּצֶדֶק יָדִין לְאֻמִּים בְּמֵישָׁרִים:

shemam machita, You wiped out their names, nothing was left of them except Noach the righteous and his family.

7. Sometimes only the enemy is destroyed *ha-oyev tamu*, the ruins however, *charavot lanetzach*, remain as everlasting evidence, indicating he had once existed. Sometimes, like in the case of the cities of Sodom, You destroy both the people and their cities, *arim natashta– avad zichrom heymah*, their memory is completely lost.

The word *heymah*, refers back to the people in those cities, else it should have said *heynah*. (if it referred to the cities themselves)

8. G'd and His celestial Court continue to sit in judgment. Everything that took place was as a result of G'd and His Court, since *konen lamishpat kisseh*, since He always prepares His throne before pronouncing judgment. (We find the words *vayered Hashem lirot*, or *va-ani* indicating the involvement of the celestial Court. (compare Genesis 11,5 and 6,17 respectively)

In the case of Sodom, the Torah had said *va-hashem himtir*, AND G'd made it rain. (Genesis 19,24)

9. You could question G'ds justice saying that since the people of the generation of the deluge did NOT make war against G'd as did those of the generation of the tower, why were the former killed, whereas the latter were treated with what appears amazing consideration?

This question has been posed by our sages in Bereshit Rabba 38,6 as well as in Yalkut Shimoni on Hoseah 520. The answer given was that the unity and harmony that existed amongst mankind during the period of the tower, was the reason that their punishment was relatively mild.

This is what David alludes to when he says *ve-hu yishpot tevel*, that G'd sits in judgment of a whole, i.e. unified mankind. Their judgment was one of *tzedek*, i.e. justice tempered by other considerations.

On other occasions, when there is no unity, each nation is judged

10 *The LORD is a haven for the oppressed, a haven in*
times of trouble.
11 *Those who know Your name trust You, for You do not*
abandon those who turn to You, O LORD.
12 *Sing a hymn to the LORD, who reigns in Zion; declare*
His deeds among the peoples.
13 *For He does not ignore the cry of the afflicted; He who*
requites bloodshed is mindful of them.
14 *Have mercy on me, O LORD; see my affliction at the*
hands of my foes, You who lift me from the gates of
death,
15 *so that in the gates of Fair Zion I might tell all Your*
praise, I might exult in Your deliverance.
16 *The nations sink in the pit they have made; their own*
foot is caught in the net they have hidden.

separately, i.e. *yadin le-umim*, not *tevel*, *bemeysharim*, in equity, without making special allowances. In David's case, as we explained the statement of Rabbi Yochanan in Avoda Zarah 4, since he was not on a moral niveau which would have normally led to such a sin as he had committed, G'd saw reason to impose a lighter sentence.

10. To understand "for I will be gracious to whomsoever I choose to be gracious to". (Exodus 33, 19), see our commentary on Psalms 6,3. We should mention the Tanchumah 27 on Parshat *ki tissa* on the statement. We must understand that the grace G'd bestows on people without merit is available for those who have not accumulated DEMERITS, have only failed to accumulate merits."

David explains that G'd has found definite merits when He sat in judgment of him. What David asks is, that He should be a refuge for the *dach* the downcast who have no merits to commend them, and not only when such people turn to G'd in prayer before they find themselves in trouble, but also when they pray to G'd only AFTER they have found themselves in trouble.

11. Even many who trust in You and know Your name without turning to You in prayer, I pray, says David, that You should prove to be a refuge for them. If they did turn to You in prayer, I would not need to appeal to You on their behalf.

12. The holy spirit replies to the Jews in exile on G'ds behalf, saying "practice acts of faith in exile so that you do not despair." The fact is that You can sing songs to G'd who has remained seated in Zion even after the destruction of the temple, i.e. it is still known as

י וִיהִי יְהוָה מִשְׂגָּב לַדָּךְ מִשְׂגָּב לְעִתּוֹת בַּצָּרָה:
יא וְיִבְטְחוּ בְךָ יוֹדְעֵי שְׁמֶךָ כִּי לֹא-עָזַבְתָּ דֹּרְשֶׁיךָ יְהוָה:
יב זַמְּרוּ לַיהוָה יֹשֵׁב צִיּוֹן הַגִּידוּ בָעַמִּים עֲלִילוֹתָיו:
יג כִּי-דֹרֵשׁ דָּמִים אוֹתָם זָכָר לֹא-שָׁכַח צַעֲקַת עֲנָיִים:
יד חָנְנֵנִי יְהוָה רְאֵה עָנְיִי מִשֹּׂנְאָי מְרוֹמְמִי מִשַּׁעֲרֵי-מָוֶת:
טו לְמַעַן אֲסַפְּרָה כָּל-תְּהִלָּתֶיךָ בְּשַׁעֲרֵי בַת-צִיּוֹן אָגִילָה בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ:
טז טָבְעוּ גוֹיִם בְּשַׁחַת עָשׂוּ בְּרֶשֶׁת-זוּ טָמָנוּ נִלְכְּדָה רַגְלָם:

har ha-elokim, the mountain of G'd. (see Psalms 48,2, it is still *har kodsho*, the mountain of His holiness) The Shechina at the *kotel*, the Western Wall is still awaiting your return. Another act of faith that you Israel can perform, is that you tell the nations about G'ds wonderful deeds while you are in exile.

13. You can reason as follows. If G'd who demands the blood of the Jewish people from the gentiles who have shed it, remembers those nations, i.e. gives them credit for acts of kindness performed towards Jews, how much less will G'd forget the outcry of the humble ones! (who have not shed anyone's blood) (Compare Nedarim 50, "if this is how kind He is to those who transgress His will, how much more kind must He be towards those who have meticulously performed His will")

14. The holy spirit continues,– this time assuming the role of presenting Israel's case, "be gracious to me, grant me a two fold favour", i.e. restoration of glory of the *Shechinah* and salvation for Israel. I am not making my own *onyi*, affliction the principal subject of my quest, since I realise that my exile is for my own benefit, namely to spare me the need to be judged in purgatory. (Bereshit Rabba 44,21) My main concern is Your "salvation". My own *oni*, elevates me *merome-meni mishaa-rey mavet* from the gates of death which *son-ay* those who hate me would consign me to.

15. The gist of my joy is to be able to tell of the restoration to glory of the *Shechinah*. I want to be able to tell Your praises which will then be revealed to all. I am confident, that as a by product, I will also enjoy redemption, according to the principle that if someone prays for his fellow man to be granted a request which the supplicant

17*The LORD has made Himself known: He works judgment; the wicked man is snared by his own devices. Higgaion.* Selah
18*Let the wicked be in* Sheol, *all the nations who ignore God!*
19*Not always shall the needy be ignored, nor the hope of the afflicted forever lost.*
20*Rise, O LORD! Let no men have power; let the nations be judged in Your presence.*
21*Strike fear into them, O LORD; let the nations know they are only men.* Selah.

is himself in need of, he will be heard first. (compare Baba Kama 92, re Abraham's prayer for Avimelech's household in Genesis 20, 17.)

16. Another assurance designed to strengthen our faith in G'd during our sojourn in exile is the fact that the nations who have dug pits for the Jewish people will be caught in their own net, demonstrating that G'd still punishes in a way that makes the punishment fit the crime, just as He did during Israel's stay in Egypt. (compare Sotah 8 on Exodus 18,11 and Sotah 11).

The Psalmist uses the drowning of the Egyptians as an illustration of the point. They who had drowned Jewish children were themselves drowned in the sea.

The Egyptians had been trying to outsmart the Jewish G'd, who had vowed not to bring another deluge on mankind. They had felt secure in drowning Jewish babies with impunity, in the knowledge that G'd matches the punishment to the crime.

However, G'd indeed did not BRING the deluge on the Egyptians. He rather allowed the Egyptians to walk into the deluge, by stepping into the sea. They walked right into the deluge, unaware of what they were doing.

17. At that time G'ds name became hallowed in 3 ways. 1) G'd became known to those who had refused to acknowledge His existence. (Exodus 5, 2) 2) They realised that G'd had carried out justice, i.e. He had not abandoned earth. 3) They realised that justice is not the exclusive domain of the attribute of justice, but that the attribute of mercy also judges. This is what is referred to as ***hashem mishpat assah befo-al***, the attribute of mercy executed judgment. Since that time, the wicked is ensnared in the work of his own hands, i.e. ***po-al kappav***. It became fashionable to recognise the judgments of G'd by the ***higayon***, by the eminent common sense of those judgments.

יז נוֹדַע יְהוָה מִשְׁפָּט עָשָׂה בְּפֹעַל כַּפָּיו נוֹקֵשׁ רָשָׁע
הִגָּיוֹן סֶלָה:
יח יָשׁוּבוּ רְשָׁעִים לִשְׁאוֹלָה כָּל-גּוֹיִם שְׁכֵחֵי אֱלֹהִים:
יט כִּי לֹא לָנֶצַח יִשָּׁכַח אֶבְיוֹן תִּקְוַת עֲנִיִּים תֹּאבַד לָעַד:
כ קוּמָה יְהוָה אַל-יָעֹז אֱנוֹשׁ יִשָּׁפְטוּ גוֹיִם עַל-פָּנֶיךָ:
כא שִׁיתָה יְהוָה מוֹרָה לָהֶם יֵדְעוּ גוֹיִם אֱנוֹשׁ הֵמָּה סֶלָה:

The Psalmist looks forward to future such displays of G'ds judgments. (compare Rashi on Proverbs 16,11)

18. Even if nations-after death– will return to their graves a second time, after having risen to face the day of judgment, such judgment is not a *kidush hashem*, sanctification of G'ds name. This is because during their lifetime they had all escaped retribution and therefore had become *she-cheychey hashem*, forgetful of G'ds very existence.

19. We are only concerned with the sanctification of Your name, since we are certain that You will help us. The destitute cannot remain forgotten forever, neither can the hope of the poor man be lost for eternity.

20. Therefore, we urge You G'd to arise NOW against them. If You say that the time for redemption has not arrived, and that we are not worthy to advance that timetable on our account, *al ya-oz enosh*, at least let not man PREVAIL, humble them in the manner they have humbled us, so that they will be seen to have brought judgment upon themselves, i.e. *yishaftu goyim*. They should recognise that their judgment is due to their treatment of Israel. They will then acknowledge the justice of their judgment– and even if they do not admit it openly, at least *al panecha*, vis a vis You they will acknowledge it, and Your name will have been sanctified.

21. We do not have the audacity to request that they be in fear of us– as would be appropriate if we were to be righteous. (compare Genesis 9,2)

We merely want that that You should inspire a degree of fear, *morah* in them generally. Should You say that in that case they would be too weak to enslave you and to fulfil Abraham's choice to save us from purgatory, we reply that we do not ask that You instil that much fear within them.

All we want is that the host nations realise that even while we are subordinate to them, they are merely *enosh* not *adam*, they must not

10 [1]*Why, O LORD, do You stand aloof, heedless in times of trouble?*
[2]*The wicked in his arrogance hounds the lowly — may they be caught in the schemes they devise!*

feel morally superior to us. (compare Yebamot 61 and Baba Metzia 114) They remain *enosh*, human species of a low order. (predominantly material in outlook)

Only Your servants are entitled to the designation *adam* on an ongoing basis. The spelling of *morah* with the letter *heh* at the end, instead of the customary *aleph*, is a hint that the Psalmist refers to all 4 exiles. (The letter *heh* equals 5, versus the letter *aleph* which equals 1)

Psalm 10.

1. This hymn,– both its beginning and its end– clearly demonstrates that it discusses how the Jews are being treated while in exile. Its beginning lacks the customary introduction *mizmor*, a hymn, or *lamenatzeach*, which would indicate that a Psalm is about to commence.

Clearly, this hymn is a continuation of the mood the Psalmist had been in at the end of the last Psalm when he discussed the kingdoms who exert their dominance over us while we are in exile.

The reason it is presented as a separate hymn is, that it has not been inspired by the holy spirit. Also the end of this hymn speaks of the nations who rule us during exile, commencing with verse 16, i.e. *avdu goyim*, the nations have perished. However, the intervening verses i.e. *botzea berech* in verse 3 and onwards refer to members of the Jewish people themselves. (compare Baba Kama 94 or Sanhedrin 6 discussing Jews who recite a benediction over stolen grain harvests).

True, the intervening verses are ALSO applicable to the gentile nations. David describes amongst other things how patient G'd is with those who enslave us, and that this may be a factor in wealthy Jewish heretics suppressing their poor but faithful fellow Jews.

Seeing that G'd does not punish those who oppress His chosen people, the wicked Jew, i.e. the non observant Jew, assumes that the *tzaddik*, righteous, does NOT enjoy G'ds protection either and that he, the *rasha*, heretic is safe in abusing the *tzaddik*.

The letter *bet* in the word *berachok*, at a distance, is superfluous. David asserts that though the whole earth is full of the Lord's glory, the murkiness that characterizes earth's raw material creates a

י

א לָמָה יְהוָה תַּעֲמֹד בְּרָחוֹק תַּעְלִים לְעִתּוֹת בַּצָּרָה:
ב בְּגַאֲוַת-רָשָׁע יִדְלַק עָנִי יִתָּפְשׂוּ בְמִזְמוֹת זוּ חָשָׁבוּ:

qualitative distance from G'd. This qualitative distance the Psalmist calls *rachok*, and especially the part of the globe which is outside the boundaries of *eretz yisrael*, the holy land.

Our sages have described the very air outside the land of Israel as being impure. (Gittin 8) It is strange to imagine G'ds *Shechinah*, presence as residing in that part of the globe. However, due to G'ds great fondness for us, He has allowed His Presence to be exiled together with us. Our sages, (Megillah 29) stated that when Israel was exiled to Babylonia, the *Shechinah* went into exile with them. The same continued while Israel was under the rule of the Medes. (Ahasverus, the second of our 4 exiles)

All this was in order to hover over His children so that they would not perish due to the nightmarish experiences of exile from their homeland.

This is what is meant when the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1,1) says "and I was in the exile." His vision included seeing the *Shechinah* in chains standing amongst the myrthe branches. The Psalmist therefore is saying "to what purpose did You G'd leave Your habitat and stand in a place i.e. called *rachok*, distant? What advantage do You get out of this? It is not befitting Your glory that You should occupy a position outside the land of Israel!

Especially is this so, since You went into hiding at the very time Your people experience persecution, i.e. *le-ittot batzarah*, at the times of trouble!

The word *ittot*, times, in the plural, is a hint that the degree of suffering experienced by the Jewish people in exile, varies from time to time. Sometimes exile is more bearable than at other times. The Psalmist, i.e. Israel, sees no advantage in the *Shechinah* having exiled itself.

2. As stated, withdrawal of the visible effects of the *Shechinah* presence encourages the heretic Jew in his ways instead of bringing him back to the fold. This is especially so when he fails to observe that G'd looks after the needs of the humble and pious. The poor but pious Jew, observing the success of his non observant fellow Jew will eventually conclude that G'd must love the wealthy. Or, even worse, the wealthy will convince himself that his success is due to his *mazzal*, to horoscopic forces, to laws of nature, that there is no point in his giving alms to the poor.

The Psalmist therefore says "the arrogant wicked pursues the

3The wicked crows about his unbridled lusts; the grasping man reviles and scorns the LORD.
4The wicked, arrogant as he is, in all his scheming [thinks], "He does not call to account; God does not care."
5His ways prosper at all times; Your judgments are far beyond him; he snorts at all his foes.
6He thinks, "I shall not be shaken, through all time never be in trouble."
7His mouth is full of oaths, deceit, and fraud; mischief and evil are under his tongue.

poor man *yidlak*, as a result of *ta-alim le-ittot batzarah*, Your concealing Your Presence during times of trouble". Therefore, the Psalmist prays *yitofssu bi-mezimot* let those who think along those lines become ensnared in their own plans. For this reason also, the Psalmist urges G'd at the end of this hymn to terminate the exile, seeing that the exile experience is at the root of all the failings Jews display while they are undergoing that experience.

The disease of non belief in G'ds Providence is catching. The poor, but humble, is infected by the wealth of the wicked and his ongoing success. Interestingly, though the Psalmist speaks about the *rasha*, wicked in the singular, he describes what is going to happen in the plural i.e. *yitofssu mezimot*, i.e. all the poor who in their burning anger at the success of the *rasha* will adopt similar lines of philosophy, i.e. *chashavu*, will think like the *mezimot*, plans of the *rasha*.

The result is that BOTH *rasha* and *ani*, the wicked and the one time poor but pious, i.e. a PLURAL of people will think along the same lines.

This situation will develop step by step. First, the success of the *rasha* misleads the *ani*, i.e. *hillel rasha*, the heretic boasts of *ta-avat nafsho*, the desire of his soul, whereas in reality he is only concerned with *ta-avat gufo*, the desires of his body. However, in his hypocrisy he pronounces benedictions which are designed to make him appear as if his sole interest in wealth is to give generously to charity, to support the needy etc. The fact that the benedictions are pronounced over ill gotten gains make them equivalent to blasphemy, mockery of G'd. This is what is meant by *botzea berech ni-etz Hashem*, pronouncing blessings is a mockery of G'd.

These very "pious" pretenses of the *rasha*, *yidlak ani*, ignite (from delek) the mind of the poor, make his anger burn. This all the more

ג כִּי-הִלֵּל רָשָׁע עַל תַּאֲוַת נַפְשׁוֹ וּבֹצֵעַ בֵּרַךְ נִאֵץ יְהוָה:
ד רָשָׁע כְּגֹבַהּ אַפּוֹ בַּל יִדְרֹשׁ אֵין אֱלֹהִים כָּל מְזִמֹּתָיו:
ה יָחִילוּ דְרָכָו בְּכָל-עֵת מָרוֹם מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ מִנֶּגְדּוֹ כָּל-
צוֹרְרָיו יָפִיחַ בָּהֶם:
ו אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ בַּל-אֶמּוֹט לְדֹר וָדֹר אֲשֶׁר לֹא-בְרָע:
ז אָלָה פִּיהוּ מָלֵא וּמִרְמוֹת וָתֹךְ תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנוֹ עָמָל וָאָוֶן:

so since he depends on the handouts of the wealthy hypocrite.

4. The Psalmist now has to demonstrate how the wrong conclusions were drawn, how also the *rasha* was caught by these *mezimot*, plans of the wicked wealthy person. He begins with the *rasha*. The wicked who practices evil and thanks the Lord for his success by pronouncing empty ringing benedictions, eventually *bal yidrosh*, will not even seek out anymore, i.e. will cease even to pay lip service to G'd. The reaction of the poor but so far loyal Jew will also be *bal yidrosh*. He will cease asking the Torah scholars of his generation to explain to him why G'd allows success to the wealthy *rasha*. He does so because he too has become *kegova apo*, arrogant. Having observed the success of the *rasha*, he has concluded that there cannot be a G'd. This means *kol mezimotav*, all his plans. (plural) Both the rich and the poor have now adopted the same basic philosophy, i.e. that there is no Divine interest in individual fates.

5. He, i.e. the wealthy, believes that his success will continue indefinitely, *yachilu bechol et*, since, despite his more and more self centred attitude he has not suffered any reverses which would have indicated Divine displeasure with his lifestyle.

He views his own self as *marom*, supreme, views all Divine ordinances or judgments, i.e. *mishpatecha*, as directed against others, i.e. *kenegdo*. He puffs at all his adversaries *tzorrerav*, if he is unable to destroy them by means of the traps he has set for them.

He persuades himself that his adversaries must be the truly wicked, seeing they have been stricken with afflictions that he thought at one time he himself might be struck with. (if the conventional view of Divine justice had indeed been correct)

6. The reason he does not even consider that the wheel of fortune might one day turn against him is, that he observes in history that at least during 2 generations, i.e. *ledor vador* he has not experienced a bad time.

7. His mouth is full of false oaths, for there are NO people who do

[8]He lurks in outlying places; from a covert he slays the innocent; his eyes spy out the hapless.
[9]He waits in a covert like a lion in his lair; waits to seize the lowly; he seizes the lowly as he pulls his net shut;
[10]he stoops, he crouches, and the hapless fall prey to his might.
[11]He thinks, "God is not mindful, He hides His face, He never looks."
[12]Rise, O LORD! Strike at him, O God! Do not forget the lowly.

not at least live in 2 generations. They grow up during the generation of their parents, and they grow old during their own generation. Thus their experience during this time proves very little. (We see in Genesis 6,9 *tamim hayah bedorotav*, (plural) that Noach was perfect during his generations, that the reference is to his own generation and that of his parents. Had there truly been visible Divine justice, (as described in Zachariah 5,3–5) when the prophet threatens those who swear falsely etc, and he had received retribution in kind, this *rasha* might not have been misled.

When Jews observe none of the prophets, threats against people like themselves becoming fulfilled, *tachat leshono amal va-aven*, such person when pretending to swear an oath commits a double crime since under his breath, i.e. *tachat leshono*, he whispers that he is not really swearing to the truth.

8. The subject of this verse is still the successful *rasha*. After having boasted about his success as a heretic, that *ta-avat nafsho* the innermost desire of his soul is really robbery and sexual licentiousness practiced under the guise of lip service to G'd and His commandments (while in fact denying G'ds Providence a form of idol worship), the Psalmist says that it will not be long before such a person will engage in bloodshed, at least in an indirect way.

First, he will do so in very secret places, *bema-arav chatzerim*, an ambush in an isolated courtyard, robbing only wealthy victims.

He will establish personal credibility as a harmless individual, because he lets the poor wretch, *chelchah* pass by unharmed.

eynav yitzponu, his eyes keep special lookout for such wretches. He will acquire a reputation as a helpful lookout for the traveller.

9. After that, he will take only minimal precautions against discovery, hide only like a lion in a flimsy hut–, ready to pounce even

ח יֹשֵׁב בְּמַאֲרַב חֲצֵרִים בַּמִּסְתָּרִים יַהֲרֹג נָקִי עֵינָיו
לְחֶלְכָּה יִצְפֹּנוּ׃
ט יֶאֱרֹב בַּמִּסְתָּר כְּאַרְיֵה בְּסֻכּה יֶאֱרֹב לַחֲטוֹף עָנִי יַחֲטֹף
עָנִי בְּמָשְׁכוֹ בְרִשְׁתּוֹ׃
י וְדָכֶה יָשַׁח וְנָפַל בַּעֲצוּמָיו חֶלְכָּאִים׃
יא אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ שָׁכַח אֵל הִסְתִּיר פָּנָיו בַּל-רָאָה לָנֶצַח׃
יב קוּמָה יְהוָה אֵל-נְשָׂא יָדֶךָ אַל תִּשְׁכַּח עֲנָיִים׃
יג עַל-מֶה נִאֵץ רָשָׁע אֱלֹהִים אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ לֹא תִדְרֹשׁ׃

on the poor. He no longer restricts himself to robbing wealthy victims. He will lure his victim by promising to show him a safe hiding place.

Yachatof oni bemoshcho berishto, He will snatch the poor by drawing him into his net.

10. When the poor man pleads for his life *vedikeh yeshoach*, he not only spares his life, but also does not rob him. He does this in the knowledge that his partners in crime who sit at the crossroads will strip the poor man naked. This maneuver is designed to maintain the credibility of the rich *rasha* as a trustworthy person, until many people trust him. At that point, he will take advantage of all those people.

Or– he appears to commiserate with the poor by lamenting that *atzumav*, more powerful robbers will attack such *chelkaim*, poor wretches.

11. Referring now to the poor man, (the one who used to be loyal to G'd), the Psalmist describes how after such experiences, such a poor man will conclude *shachach el,* G'd has forgotten, *histir panav*, has hidden His face, i.e. is not interested in justice on earth, *bal ra-ah lanetzach*, that since the destruction of the temple, the *Shechinah* has departed never to return. He concludes that G'd has allowed fates to governed by *mazzalot*, horoscopic constellations. It is therefore impossible to prove G'ds majesty. All this is the result of the arrogance of the wicked, *ga-avat rasha*, whose behaviour resulted in even the poor loyal Jew's faith becoming corrupted.

12. Now the Psalmist urges G'd to arise and NOT appear to forget the humble. It is time to remove Your merciful protection of the wicked. G'ds mercy or kindness should NOW be manifested by His not appearing to forget the humble faithful.

Do not let them depend for their livelihood on the wealthy,

13 *Why should the wicked man scorn God, thinking You do not call to account?*
14 *You do look! You take not of mischief and vexation! To requite is in Your power.*
To You the hapless can entrust himself; You have ever been the orphan's help.
15 *O break the power of the wicked and evil man, so that when You look for his wickedness You will find it no more.*
16 *The LORD is king for ever and ever; the nations will perish from His land.*

especially when these wealthy are heretics, but *nessah yadcha*, lift Your own hand, i.e. provide for them directly.

13. After all, what caused the wicked to mock G'd? He had said in his heart that since You G'd do not provide for Your faithful and poor servant but make him dependant on a handout from me, therefore *lo tidrosh*, You evidently do not care.

14. Since You O Lord have seen, i.e. have looked into the hearts of people, You know that You Yourself should feed the poor,– not through intermediaries, i.e. the wealthy.

You might respond that You cannot do so since the difficulty, i.e. *amal* of the poor is due either to *ka-ass*, the anger he feels against the success of the rich, or to the fact that this poor person is a re-incarnate of a former sinner who has to rehabilitate himself in this second life on earth.

This is why I do not ask You G'd to make the poor person rich, says the Psalmist. All I ask is that the little which he now receives as a handout from the wealthy, shall be provided for him directly by You, *tabit latet beyadecha.*

The poor wretch will then learn to rely on You, *ya-asov chelecha*, he will leave relying on the wealthy. After all, just as for the orphan *attah hayita ozer*, You have been the Helper, so he too is Your son.

15. It is G'ds habit to overlook insults to Himself but not insults to His creatures. An example is the instance when Jerobam who mounted the altar to offer to idols, G'd did not react until he commanded that His prophet Iddo be arrested. (Kings I 13, 1–8). Also, Elijah who decreed famine while in the house of Chiel together with king Achav, did so only after Achav had mocked G'd and his mission as a prophet. G'd had looked on while Israel worshipped the *baal*, (idol) for a long period of time. (based on Rashi and ancient sources on Kings I 17,1 and the connection with the previous chapter there).

יד רָאִתָה כִּי-אַתָּה עָמָל וָכַעַס תַּבִּיט לָתֵת בְּיָדֶךָ עָלֶיךָ
יַעֲזֹב חֶלְכָה יָתוֹם אַתָּה הָיִיתָ עוֹזֵר:
טו שְׁבֹר זְרוֹעַ רָשָׁע וָרָע תִּדְרוֹשׁ-רִשְׁעוֹ בַל-תִּמְצָא:
טז יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ עוֹלָם וָעֶד אָבְדוּ גוֹיִם מֵאַרְצוֹ:

The *rasha*, when his *rishut*, wickedness is directed only against heaven, is called *rasha*. When his *rishut*, wickedness is directed against his fellow man however, he is called *rasha ra*, a wicked evildoer.

The Psalmist, parallel to G'ds practice, states that since G'd breaks the arm of Jerobam who wanted to kill the prophet Iddo, but did not bother to punish Jerobam for sacrificing to the *Baal*, it is proper for us to apply the same reasoning. We must not ask about relief for ourselves, but may request that G'd punish those who are *rasha* against heaven.

We therefore ask that G'd punish those who offend Him, but concerning those who oppress US– we do not ask G'd to intervene.

If You would display that You react to those who offend You, an unusual event, then such practice would cease immediately. Not only that, but the guilty would reason that if G'd punishes offences against Himself promptly (something He does not usually do), how much more promptly would He punish offences against His people, (something He normally reacts to promptly). As a result, *risho bal timtza*, You would no longer be able to find his wickedness.

16. We explained earlier that this hymn addresses itself 1) to the gentiles who oppress Israel in exile. 2) To the wicked Jews themselves. #2 i.e. the fact that there are wicked Jews is the result of #1, i.e. the abuse we suffer by the gentiles during our exile. Had G'd not allowed the gentiles to get away with persecuting the Jewish people cruelly in exile, there would not be any Jewish heretics.

The Psalmist, in the guise of Israel speaking, repeats (as we explained at the outset in connection with the expression *be-rachok*, i.e. G'd causes the gentiles to abuse the power they have over us by acting as if He wre "distant") that G'ds desire is to be king over His universe for ever more. True, *hashem malach*, G'd ruled even before he created a universe. Also *hashem yimloch* He will rule after the universe has been dissolved like the garments which are worn out. Nonetheless, G'ds being king implies that he has subjects to rule over. Israel is concerned with this major objective of G'd. We want *hashem melech leolam va-ed*, that G'd will be effective king forever. Israel

17 *You will listen to the entreaty of the lowly, O LORD,*
You will make their hearts firm; You will incline Your ear
18 *to champion the orphan and the downtrodden, that*
men who are of the earth tyrannize no more.

11 1 *For the leader. Of David.*
In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to me,
"Take to the hills like a bird!

does not want to ask G'd to improve its status in exile. Israel is concerned with the MAJOR problem, that G'd should be effective king forever. *avdu goyim meartzo* This can only be after the *Shechinah* comes out of its self imposed exile. At that time the gentile nations will anyways have perished from this earth. Once this has happened, Israel's redemption is automatic, hence we need not ask for it specifically.

17. You, of course, have heard the desire of the humble. If You have not responded todate, it is because their (Israel's) heart is distant from You. When You prepare their hearts, *tikshov oznecha*, then Your ears can listen. (compare Isaiah chapter 1, Yalkut Shimoni, that *shema* is hearing from a distance, whereas *ha-azanah* or *hakshavah* is listening from close by).

18. The way the hearts of the Jewish people can be primed is if he, i.e. Israel will judge the orphan and the oppressed (fairly). By the merit of displaying pity towards these categories of people, G'd in turn will display pity towards you.

Not only that, but *bal yossif od la-arotz enosh*, the second rate human being, i.e. *enosh* will not again intimidate, i.e. *arotz*, especially *min ha-aretz*, since their whole orientation is based on earth, devoid of spiritual content. (compare Yebamot 61 and Baba Metzia 114 that only Israel qualifies for the term *adam*, that idol worshippers can never qualify for such a title).

Psalm 11.

1. This Psalm too, discusses problems in our exile. It concerns primarily our greatest dilemma, the outside pressure to forswear allegiance to G'd and Torah, and to convert to another religion. (Megillat Taanit end of second chapter) This is especially true of the Greek exile (in our own country even), when the Greeks (Antiochus)

יז תַּאֲוַת עֲנָוִים שָׁמַעְתָּ יְהוָה תָּכִין לִבָּם תַּקְשִׁיב אָזְנֶךָ:
יח לִשְׁפֹּט יָתוֹם וָדָךְ בַּל-יוֹסִיף עוֹד לַעֲרֹץ אֱנוֹשׁ מִן-
הָאָרֶץ:

יא א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד בַּיהוָה חָסִיתִי אֵיךְ תֹּאמְרוּ לְנַפְשִׁי נוּדִי
הַרְכֶם צִפּוֹר:

insisted that we should inscribe the horns of our oxen with the slogan "we have no share in the G'd of Israel". (Bereshit Rabba 2,4)

Similarly, the story of Hanna and her seven sons, all of whom died rather than submit to religious conversion, even of a symbolic nature. (Gittin 57) Also during the crusades tens of thousands of Jews died rather than embrace Christianity. Of all those, the holy spirit says that they had declared "in the Lord I have put my trust", *bashem chassiti.*

The argument used by our hosts at that time to appeal to our soul was *nudi*, flee!, so that you can get away from G'd. For the G'd who used to be strong as a mountain, *harchem*, and came to our aid, has meantime become like a migrating bird, *tzippor nodo* that leaves its nest and disappears from us completely.

Before facing those who wanted to convert us to rebut their arguments, these Jews opened their mouths to declare their faith in G'd, and challenged "how can you dare say to my soul that we should flee from our roots, and that G'd has removed His Presence from earth permanently, i.e. "that your mountain is merely a bird and that He left His supervision of earth permanently?"

Had this argument been applied to some tangible being, a body, perhaps such argument could be debatable since the enemy offers to exchange our body for our soul.

After all, all the enemy can do is to kill my body. The Jew replies "kill my body so I need not watch my soul perish".

This is what Chananyah Mischael and Azaryah said to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3,16) "we are not concerned to reply to you about this matter". Nebuchadnezzar, in Daniel 3,28, recognised that these three men had offered their bodies to save their eternal souls.

Veyahavu gishmeyhaun. The souls were under their own control, whereas the bodies were under the king's control. Therefore they had done well not to surrender that which was theirs in order to retain that which was not theirs anyways. The Psalmist here echoes

2For see, the wicked bend the bow, they set their arrow on the string to shoot from the shadows at the upright.
3When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous man do?"
4The LORD is in His holy palace; the LORD—His throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His gaze searches mankind.
5The LORD seeks out the righteous man, but loathes the wicked one who loves injustice.

the feelings of Chananyah and companions when he exclaims unbelievingly "how can you suggests that I trade my soul?"

If we were to assume that the Psalmist, i.e. David, speaks about this personal soul, the soul which will eventually inhabit the body of the Messiah the redeemer, we need to understand David's declaration as one of faith that even after the destrucvtion of the temple, G'ds 4 lettered name will eventually be restored, i.e. *be-HASHEM chassiti*, I have faith in the name HASHEM, that it will be fully revealed at the redemption and the mere suggestion that G'd has withdrawn from earth permanently is intolerable.

2. David tries to explain the reasoning of the people who try to convert us. He views the basic premise as similar to a bow, the actual argument as the arrow. When premise and argument are properly aligned, the arrow, i.e. the argument is effective, hits the target; when the alignment is faulty, it is like shooting in the dark at *yishrey lev*, the pure in heart. The premise *harchem tzippor*, "your mountain is like a bird", is so faulty that arrows shot from that "bow", *keshet*, are bound to miss their target.

3. The *nimshal*, moral lesson of the parable is faulty, since it was based on comparing Israel to Jerusalem and the temple. If Israel had sinned against G'd, surely the temple and Jerusalem were not guilty! Thus, the gentiles reasoned if not only Israel but also Jerusalem and the temple lie in ruins, this points to G'ds impotence, not to voluntary withdrawal.

Because the bow is faulty then, the arrows i.e. the conclusions drawn from such a premise will miss the target. The gentiles' logic misleads them like the archer who cannot hit the target in the dark.

They have not pierced our hearts with their logic (the object of the arrows) since the Jew in exile is certain that G'd has not abandoned earth.

Whether G'd is in His holy sanctuary on earth, or in His sanctuary in the heavens, He has not stopped excercising control even over

ג כִּי הִנֵּה הָרְשָׁעִים יִדְרְכוּן קֶשֶׁת כּוֹנְנוּ חִצָּם עַל-יֶתֶר
לִירוֹת בְּמוֹ-אֹפֶל לְיִשְׁרֵי-לֵב:
ג כִּי הַשָּׁתוֹת יֶהֱרָסוּן צַדִּיק מַה-פָּעָל:
ד יְהוָה בְּהֵיכַל קָדְשׁוֹ יְהוָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם כִּסְאוֹ עֵינָיו יֶחֱזוּ
עַפְעַפָּיו יִבְחֲנוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם ה יְהוָה צַדִּיק יִבְחָן וְרָשָׁע
וְאֹהֵב חָמָס שָׂנְאָה נַפְשׁוֹ:

minutiae, is aware of what goes on within each womb, even. *eynav yechezu*, His eyes see, *afapov yivchanu beney adam*, His eyelids examine man. The term *eynav* His eyes, is used for the periods when the temple is standing and G'd has an abode on earth, the principal site of the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence.

Afapov, His eyelids, refers to the periods when G'd is in heaven, i.e. when He has established His throne in the heavens, and appears to us down here as if He had gone to sleep, i.e. as if His eyelids were closed.

Even when He suffers blasphemers dancing on the site that used to be His temple, His eyelids, i.e. the forces of the *Shechinah* that extend to the periphery of the universe, in each area in accordance with G'ds dignity and honour,– examine man.

David addresses himself to the argument that if His eyes see, how can His eyelids examine and test man? Does this not imply that He needs to know, i.e. has NOT seen?

The Torah in Genesis 22,2 states "and the Lord tested Abraham". When He tests, He appears as if He wants to see what is in someone's heart, i.e. He did not know beforehand. Surely, if G'd "tested" Abraham, This proves He had been in heaven at the time not on earth! Our sages have taught that the *Shechinah* descended from the 7th heaven (outermost) to the 6th heaven in the lifetime of Abraham, having previously withdrawn from earth in stages. (Bereshit Rabba 19,7).

The argument is that if G'd NEEDS to test what is in man's heart, He obviously does not supervise what goes on within His creatures on earth!

5. The gentiles' premise is wrong. Why would G'd examine the truly righteous, whereas he does NOT bother to examine those who only act piously but are hypocrites! Is G'd in greater doubt about what goes on in the heart of each *tzaddik*, than about what goes on in the heart of a *rasha*, wicked person?

6*He will rain down upon the wicked blazing coals and sulfur; a scorching wind shall be their lot.*
7*For the LORD is righteous; He loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold His face.*

12 1*For the leader; on the* sheminith. *A psalm of David.*
2*Help, O LORD! For the faithful are no more; the loyal have vanished from among men.*

To the question why G'd DOES examine the *tzaddik*, the Psalmist answers that it is NOT because He needs to find out the *tzaddik*'s thinking, but, to publicise to the world his righteousness. This is why He "tested" Abraham. (Bereshit Rabba 55,2, Tanchuma Vayera 30. G'd Knows the *tzaddik* can stand the test. He does not bother to test the *rasha*, since He knows that he will fail the test anyways)

A potter who tests the soundness of his vessels in front of his potential customers, does not strike the imperfect vessels since he is afraid they will shatter.

Bereshit Rabba 54,2 tells us that Abraham was acknowledged as pious only AFTER G'd had demonstrated that though Abraham acted unconventionally, (i.e. accepted Hagar as his wife, agreed to her expulsion (first time), listened to his wife Sarah and expelled his first born son Ishmael plus his mother) ALL these acts had turned out successful.

When someone who is sound is examined, such examination is called *bechinah*, i.e. *hashem tzaddik yivchan.*

How can the unsound, i.e. the wicked be tested? Would it become acceptable to a prospective buyer? G'd hates the wicked.

However, there are two kinds of *resha-im*, wicked people, whose wickedness is not public knowledge. One restricts his wickedness to his relationship vis a vis G'd, something the people at large are not aware of.

The other loves to deal autocratically and violently with his fellow man but does it in such a way that people remain unaware of this. They only "love violence in their hearts". Both types are abhorrent to G'd, i.e. *san-ah nafsho.* Since G'd does not need to examine them, He contents Himself with His knowledge.

6. He sends down snares for them, fire and brimstone. In other words, G'ds patience IS LIMITED; these *resha-im*, wicked people, will get what they deserve. G'd merely waited for the measure of their sins to be complete; i.e. *menot kossam.* (Zohar 2,58) The Psalmist

ז יַמְטֵר עַל-רְשָׁעִים פַּחִים אֵשׁ וְגָפְרִית וְרוּחַ זִלְעָפוֹת
מְנָת כּוֹסָם:
ח כִּי-צַדִּיק יְהוָה צְדָקוֹת אָהֵב יָשָׁר יֶחֱזוּ פָנִימוֹ:

יב א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-הַשְּׁמִינִית מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
ב הוֹשִׁיעָה יְהוָה כִּי-גָמַר חָסִיד כִּי פַסּוּ אֱמוּנִים מִבְּנֵי
אָדָם:

includes what will happen to people who have escaped G'ds retribution. We read in Zachariah 14,12, that "all the people who have fought against Jerusalem will suffer the plague described there". The prophet does NOT say "those that WILL fight against Jerusalem", i.e. at the time of *gog and magog*, the war preceding the arrival of the Messiah.

Rather, he includes all those who at one time or another HAVE fought against Jerusalem, but have NOT YET been punished for it. Each Jew at that time will witness how G'd brings retribution on every gentile who has caused him trouble. He will only need to indentify the gentile and the specific type of abuse he suffered from him, for G'd to demonstrate His way of avenging such deeds. The Psalmist explains why the *yishrey lev*, the pure of heart, have not yet seen this *nekamah*, revenge. It was only because the measure of the gentiles' guilt had not been full.

7. Because G'd loves righteousness, He will let the *yashar*, the upright person see his face, i.e. that of the wicked when he identifies him, and the wicked receives his deserts. Possibly, the Psalmist describes what the body and the soul of the wicked will experience. (as per Zohar Bereshit 27. Compare also Midrash Shocher Tov, Tehillim on this chapter)

Psalm 12.

2. The Psalmist asks G'd to protect Israel. (attribute of mercy) The generation for which the Psalmist asks this cannot call on anything else but G'ds mercy.

The Midrash, Bereshit Rabba 8,5 describes different groups of angels both proposing and opposing the creation of man. The proposers pointed to man's characteristic of *chessed*, loving kindness,

[3]*Men speak lies to one another; their speech is smooth; they talk with duplicity.*
[4]*May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, every tongue that speaks arrogance.*
[5]*They say, "By our tongues we shall prevail; with lips such as ours, who can be our master?"*
[6]*"Because of the groans of the plundered poor and needy, I will now act," says the LORD. "I will give help," He affirms to him.*
[7]*The words of the LORD are pure words, silver purged in an earthen crucible, refined sevenfold.*

whereas the opposers pointed to man's inherent untruthfulness. G'd dispatched *emet*, truth to earth, to enable man to survive on earth once he would be created. (see our commentary on Psalms 85) This was done so that man's character would include both *chessed*, kindness and *emet*, truthfulness.

Hachassid, refers to the *chessed* element in man, *emunim* to the element of *emet*, truth in man.

The Psalmist calls on Divine help, seeing that both *chessed* and *emunim* are not being practiced by man, are *gamar*, finished, *passu* , i.e. *afssu*, there are no more honest men.

3. Even slick tongues speak in vain,– nobody believes anybody, since everybody knows that the other is lying, and can see into his heart, past his slick tongue.

4. They, i.e. those slick tongued flatterers call on G'd (hypocritically) to root out falsehoods, to cut out the tongues and lips of those who speak slick falsehoods against them, i.e. *belev valev yedaberu* in order to convince their opposite numbers of their own sincerity.

5. Those are the ones who assure each other of their loving concern for their fellow man, their desire to do good for them, but whose interior does not match their exterior. It is only with their tongues that they make big promises *medaberet gedolot*. They claim that since they themselves have unfettered control over their tongues, and no one is *adon* master over them, why would they need to indulge in deceptive flattery?

6. The holy spirit replies "G'd will arise even against those who have deceived their fellow man only with their tongues, have not actually hurt them with their hands, by direct action. They have robbed the poor who fail to comprehend that they have been tricked

ג שָׁוְא יְדַבְּרוּ אִישׁ אֶת-רֵעֵהוּ שִׂפַת חֲלָקוֹת בְּלֵב וָלֵב
יְדַבֵּרוּ׃
ד יַכְרֵת יְהוָה כָּל-שִׂפְתֵי חֲלָקוֹת לָשׁוֹן מְדַבֶּרֶת גְּדֹלוֹת׃
ה אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ לִלְשֹׁנֵנוּ נַגְבִּיר שְׂפָתֵינוּ אִתָּנוּ מִי אָדוֹן
לָנוּ׃
ו מִשֹּׁד עֲנִיִּים מֵאֲנָקַת אֶבְיוֹנִים עַתָּה אָקוּם יֹאמַר יְהוָה
אָשִׁית בְּיֵשַׁע יָפִיחַ לוֹ׃
ז אִמְרוֹת יְהוָה אֲמָרוֹת טְהוֹרוֹת כֶּסֶף צָרוּף בַּעֲלִיל
לָאָרֶץ מְזֻקָּק שִׁבְעָתָיִם׃

by a slick tongue, and the destitute who have no one to have pity on them but G'd.

I will arise now, says the Lord, not to DESTROY, but rather to set things right. I will include in the deliverance *yesha*, even what he puffs at himself *lo*. Note that the Psalmist does NOT say "puffs at them", meaning those whom he has deceived. Grammatically speaking, this is the construction that we would have expected. Therefore, we see in this confirmation of our comentary on Proverbs 29,5 "a man who flatters his neighbour spreads a net at his feet ", to mean "at his OWN feet". Similarly here.

The Psalmist does not need to emphasise the deliverance G'd will bring to the poor and the destitute. However, even the one who puffs himself up, as if offering deliverance to his fellow man, I will, include in the *yesha* deliverance.

7. Having said that through watching G'd deliver the poor and destitute, the *rasha* will finally realise that G'd DOES see what is going on, and that He looks after the *tzaddik*, the impression could have been created that by including the *rasha* in the *yesha* deliverance, due to his belated recognition of the *hasgachah* supervision of events by G'd, G'd has decided to act as *vatron*, as someone who indulges sinners. This, we must not assume. (Baba Kama 50) In fact the Talmud there states that anyone claiming that G'd indulges sinners, will have his own entrails shrink. How do we reconcile the *yesha* deliverance offered the slick tongued liar?

The meaning of the line is, that once the Messiah comes, G'd will make this *rasha* into refined silver, *kessef tzaruf*, seven times refined. In the 7 years during which the Messiah will appear, this *rasha* will undergo 7 times the birthpangs of the Messianic age. The afflictions

[8]*You, O LORD, will keep them, guarding each from this age evermore.*
[9]*On every side the wicked roam when baseness is exalted among men.*

13 [1]*For the leader. A psalm of David.*
[2]*How long, O LORD; will You ignore me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?*
[3]*How long will I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand?*

he will undergo then,– will ultimately be his *yesha*, deliverance. Perhaps the choice of the term *be-allil la-aretz* clearly visible on earth, instead of *ba-al la-aretz*, i.e. that there is an owner of the earth, is a hint of the workings in the crucible, (another meaning of the word *alil*) i.e. the painful process of extracting impurities from the metal. (compare Sanhedrin 97 on the era preceding the coming of the Messiah).

8. Should you think that the oppressed and the oppressor will therefore experience the SAME afflictions, the Psalmist says "You G'd will preserve (protect) and keep them safe (the poor and the destitute) during that period when the *chevley mashiach* the birth pangs of the Messiah are rampant, i.e. *midor zu* from that generation, *le-olam*, forever.

9. What about the gentiles, the wicked ones, who have refined Israel by subjecting them directly to torture and persecution? Concerning them the Psalmist says that even if they walk alongside Israel, i.e. *saviv*, they will not be able to touch Israel. Afterwards, when the Messiah has come, *kerum zulut*, according to their view of their own superiority, they will have become *zul*, cheap, base.

Each category of *rasha*, wicked person will be repaid in proportion to his wickedness, i.e. his pride. (compare Psalms 2,2) Ezekiel chapter 38,29 describes what happens to them, each according to his deserts.

Psalm 13.

1. Our sages in Bamidbar Rabba 16,22 comment that on two occasions G'd exclaimed before Israel. He exclaimed in Numbers 14,11 "how long will this nation despise and anger Me, and (secondly) how long will they not have faith in Me"!

ח אַתָּה יְהוָה תִּשְׁמְרֵם תִּצְּרֶנּוּ מִן-הַדּוֹר זוּ לְעוֹלָם:
ט סָבִיב רְשָׁעִים יִתְהַלָּכוּן כְּרֹם זֻלּוּת לִבְנֵי אָדָם:

יג א לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
ב עַד-אָנָה יְהוָה תִּשְׁכָּחֵנִי נֶצַח עַד אָנָה תַּסְתִּיר אֶת-פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי:
ג עַד-אָנָה אָשִׁית עֵצוֹת בְּנַפְשִׁי יָגוֹן בִּלְבָבִי יוֹמָם עַד-אָנָה יָרוּם אֹיְבִי עָלָי:

As a result, (punishment) "you (Israel) will have to exclaim 4 times i.e. in 4 separate exiles" how long O Lord will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me"?

Is it true that G'ds attribute of justice inflicts punishment over and beyond the measure of the sin, as this Midrash would imply? Why would Israel have to exclaim its distress in exile 4 times if it caused G'd only 2 exclamations concerning Israel's faithlessness?

Actually G'd had decreed only 2 exiles, corresponding to the 2 exclamations Israel had evoked from Him. When G'd realised, however, that Israel would not be able to cope with those 2 exiles. He decided to divide the 2 exiles into 4, so as to enable Israel to survive these periods. The 4 exiles are Babylonia, Persia (Medes) Greece (Seleucids) and Edom (Rome). All 4 are the subject matter of this Psalm.

2. "How long will you forget me?– forever?", refers to the Babylonian exile, since it had originally been decreed to become permanent (until messianic times), as Jeremiah already complains in Lamentation 5,20 "why will You forget us forever"?

Also, our sages have said that G'd had not wanted to bring redemption until the Messiah would come, and that only the tears of Rachel (Jeremiah 31,15) changed the decree. The prophet there records "stop crying, for there is a reward for your endeavours, says G'd – they WILL return from the land of the enemy" (as oppsed to the 10 tribes who will not return. Compare Rashi on that verse).

Concerning the exile under the Medes (Ahasverus), the Psalmist says "how long will You hide your face from me"? This is in accordance with our commentary that "Esther" is referred to in the Torah in the verse "I will surely hide My face" in Deuteronomy 31,18.

3. Concerning the Greek exile, our souls rather than our bodies were at risk, since they demanded that we inscribe the horns of our

4Look at me, answer me, O LORD, my God! Restore the luster to my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;
5lest my enemy say, "I have overcome him," my foes exult when I totter.
6But I trust in Your faithfulness, my heart will exult in Your deliverance. I will sing to the LORD, for He has been good to me.

oxen with a declaration that we have no share in the G'd of Israel, thus abandoning our faith, and that those who refused would be killed. We refer to our commentary on Psalms 2,1.

The Psalmist says "how long shall I take counsel in my soul"?, i.e. whether to sacrifice my body in order to save my soul? How long shall I suffer the sorrow in my heart, *yomam*, on such day when I have to make a choice between transgressing Your laws or suffer physical death! At such times I suffer two anguishes in my dual heart, *leva-vi*. This is similar to the comment in the Talmud Berachot 61 *oy li mi-yitzri, oy li mi-yotzri*, woe unto to me on account of my evil urge, woe unto me on account of my Creator.

4. The Psalmist asks G'd to take a look and to answer us, referring to the Babylonian exile, i.e. "how long will You forget us"?

Our plea is based on the fact that NOT ONLY Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah had not converted (Daniel chapter 3), but that those Jews who did bow down to the image of Nebuchadnezzar did so only for the sake of appearances, not because they meant to deny G'd. (Megillah 12)

We are told there that since the Jew's obseisance to the idol was ONLY for the sake of appearances, the decree of Haman likewise did not materialize, but was only for the sake of appearances. (based on the opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai)

The Psalmist's *habitah a-neyni*, look and answer me, is equivalent to "when You look in my heart You will know that I did not MEAN it when I bowed to the image of Nebuchadnezzar; therefore "answer me!"

Concerning the exile under the Medes, (Haman-Ahasverus) when physical death threatened the Jewish nation, the Psalmist says *ha-irah eynay*, enlighten my eyes. The letters Haman had sent to the various governors of the empire of Ahasverus which contained instructions to kill the Jews, had been sealed. They carried the instruction on the outside that they were not to be opened until the day of the massacre. This was in order to forestall any possible

ד הַבִּיטָה עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהָי הָאִירָה עֵינַי פֶּן-אִישַׁן
הַמָּוֶת:
ה פֶּן-יֹאמַר אֹיְבִי יְכָלְתִּיו צָרַי יָגִילוּ כִּי אֶמּוֹט:
ו וַאֲנִי בְחַסְדְּךָ בָטַחְתִּי יָגֵל לִבִּי בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ אָשִׁירָה
לַיהוָה כִּי גָמַל עָלָי:

counter measures which could interfere with Haman's plans. (Midrash Rabba Esther 7,24)

We have explained all this in detail in our commentary on the book of Esther.

Had G'd not revealed to Mordechai the contents of these letters, no counter measures could have been taken.

David asks that when the time comes (since he lived 600 years prior to that event) *ha-irah eynay*, that G'd should enlighten my eyes", meaning the leader of the Jewish people at that time, so that the sleep of death *iyshan hamavet* should not overtake the Jewish people before they have a chance to do *teshuvah*, repentance. The relevant words in the book of Esther are "Mordechai knew ALL that had occured" (Esther 4,1).

This is based, on the Yalkut Shimoni Ahasverus 1056, *Yada*, (past perfect) i.e. "he had known all along the reason for such decree", and not *vayeda*, (simple past tense) which would mean that he had only now become aware of all that had occured. Mordechai's awareness had been the key to having their eyes opened, and their realising the need to do *teshuvah*.

Or, simply,– Israel asks for natural death rather than violent death at the hands of its enemies.

5. The Psalmist continues– concerning the exile under the Greeks. Israel argues that the enemy– if it should succumb– would be able to assert his ascendancy over the G'd of Israel. If Israel did not succumb but was killed,– though it would occupy a lofty position in the hereafter– the enemy would still boast of having triumphed, seeing that G'd had not saved the Jews.

For this reason the Psalmist asks that such an outcome should displease G'd sufficiently to galvanise Him into rescuing the Jewish people from its predicament.

6. Concerning the exile under Edom (Romans and their successors), whose angel Jacob had not seen descend, the Psalmist follows Isaiah 63,4 "for the day of retribution is in My heart". G'd has

14 [1]*For the leader. Of David. The benighted man thinks, "God does not care." Man's deeds are corrupt and loathsome; no one does good.*
[2]*The LORD looks down from heaven on mankind to find a man of understanding, a man mindful of God.*
[3]*All have turned bad, altogether foul; there is none who does good, not even one.*
[4]*Are they so witless, all those evildoers, who devour my people as they devour food, and do not invoke the LORD?*

not revealed that day even to His own mouth, how can He therefore reveal it to anyone else? (quotation from Kohelet Rabba 12,10).

Israel can only rely on G'ds *chessed*, loving kindness, that even though undeserving, *yagel libbi bi-yeshuatecha* my heart will yet rejoice with Your salvation". Israel says "I know that G'ds kindness is boundless, i.e. *chassdey hashem ki lo tamnu* (Lamentation 3,22) even when the merits of the patriarchs have been exhausted, there is still hope.

My second assurance that redemption will come is G'ds own redemption, i.e. that of His *Shechinah*. I have faith in YOUR redemption,– hence I will be able to sing to G'd for having *gamal alay* recompensed me. (according to the principle that he who prays for the needs of a second party while himself in need of this favour, will be heard by G'd even before his prayer for his fellow man is answered) (compare Baba Kama 92, re Abraham's prayer for the household of Avimelech, Genesis 20,17)

Psalm 14.

1. Yalkut Shimoni on Psalms 662, refers this Psalm to Esau (who is the *naval*, mentioned here.) (the author's original edition has "Ishmael" instead of Esau which is probably a printer's error)

At any rate, the oppressor says ONLY in his heart that there cannot be a G'd who supervises what goes on in this world. He comes to this conclusion having observed G'ds people, Israel, in their corrupt ways, i.e. *hishchitu hitivu alilah*, their abominable ways have prompted such thinking. The reason G'd needs to tolerate Esau's blasphemy is, that were it not for Israel's conduct, Esau would think differently.

2. When G'd looks down i.e. *hishkif*, (compare Rashi on Genesis 18,16 on the meaning of *hishkif*.) He does so in order to find if there

יד א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד אָמַר נָבָל בְּלִבּוֹ אֵין אֱלֹהִים הִשְׁחִיתוּ
הִתְעִיבוּ עֲלִילָה אֵין עֹשֵׂה-טוֹב:
ב יְהוָה מִשָּׁמַיִם הִשְׁקִיף עַל-בְּנֵי-אָדָם לִרְאוֹת הֲיֵשׁ
מַשְׂכִּיל דֹּרֵשׁ אֶת-אֱלֹהִים:
ג הַכֹּל סָר יַחְדָּיו נֶאֱלָחוּ אֵין עֹשֵׂה-טוֹב אֵין גַּם אֶחָד:
ד הֲלֹא יָדְעוּ כָּל-פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן אֹכְלֵי עַמִּי אָכְלוּ לֶחֶם יְהוָה
לֹא קָרָאוּ:

is a *maskil* a man of intelligence who seeks G'd. (and who may be the counterweight to G'ds intention of bringing retribution on part of society)

3. Instead of improving its conduct as a result of G'ds *hashkafah*, i.e. His retributive activity, Israel has become even worse in exile, has lost whatever redeeming qualities it had possessed at the time G'd had sent them into exile. *hakol sar*, it has all departed, *yachdav ne-elachu* together they have become debased.

An alternative explanation. The Psalmist contrasts the exile under the Medes in which Haman a descendant of Esau was our main adversary with the present exile. Haman denied G'd as we know from Esther Rabba 7,13. At that time the decree of Haman to murder the Jewish nation remained in effect for only 3 days (13–16th of Nissan, compare Megillat Esther 3,12. and subsequent)

Our present exile however seems interminable. If succour came to the Jewish people then through the *tzaddik* Mordechai,– though they had been guilty even of bowing down to an idol–, the Psalmist asks "are there no *tzaddikim* in this generation who could trigger redemption?"

At that time, (Haman) G'd had enabled Moshe and Elijah between them to search out Mordechai *ha-ish maskil doresh*, i.e. to search for a man who actively pursued the welfare of his people. (see last verse in Megillat Esther) Would there be no such man during the last exile? i.e. *eyn osseh tov eyn gam echad*?

The Psalmist refuses to believe that not one person could be found who could rally Israel to do *teshuvah*.

4. After all, at that time (Haman)– the Jewish people had suspected Esther to be in cohoots with Ahasverus and Haman when she invited both of them to a feast at her palace.

In fact she had only acted on the advice of Solomon in Proverbs

[5]*There they will be seized with fright, for God is present in the circle of the righteous.*
[6]*You may set at naught the counsel of the lowly, but the LORD is his refuge.*
[7]*O that the deliverance of Israel might come from Zion! When the LORD restores the fortunes of His people, Jacob will exult, Israel will rejoice.*

25,21 "when your enemy is hungry feed him bread, when he is thirsty, give him water to drink".

The erroneous suspicion of Esther, led the people to think that they had after all no advocate at king Ahasverus' palace. Had they not felt abandoned by Esther, it is doubtful that they would have turned to G'd at Mordechai's urging. They might not have done teshuvah and been saved. This is the meaning of *halo yad-u kol po-aley aven*, they were all motivated to repent when they thought *ochley ami*, those who wanted to devour my people, *achlu lechem* ate bread, i.e. had a good time, *hashem lo kara-u* else they would never called upon G'd. That generation of Jews would not have called G'd had they thought of Esther as their representative at the king's palace.

5. Therefore that generation cannot even be complimented on doing *teshuvah*. Only G'd deserves the compliment for not having allowed Haman's decree to be promulgated in a generation which did not have a man of Mordechai's stature who could rally the people to do *teshuvah*, i.e. *ki elokim bedor tzaddik*, G'd made this happen in the generation which possessed a *tzaddik*.

It was he who engineered the mass repentance.

The Psalmist asks why the same could not happen again during the Roman exile, since surely there is at least one such *tzaddik* in each generation?

6. The holy spirit replies that the reason is that nowadays people would "shame the advice of the poor", i.e. if a latter day Mordechai were to call the people to display repentance, observe a 3 day total fast etc.– the people would embarass such a *tzaddik* by NOT listening to him, and thereby aggravate their guilt. Mordechai's advice had been *ki hashem machassehu* that they should place their faith in the Lord, that they should NOT place confidence in man, i.e. in their political connections as they had done as long as they thought that Esther was on their side, and an effective advocate at Court.

7. The Psalmist wishes that the redemption would originate

ה שָׁם פָּחֲדוּ פָחַד כִּי-אֱלֹהִים בְּדוֹר צַדִּיק:
ו עֲצַת-עֲנִי תָּבִישׁוּ כִּי יְהוָה מַחְסֵהוּ:
ז מִי-יִתֵּן מִצִּיּוֹן יְשׁוּעַת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשׁוּב יְהוָה שְׁבוּת עַמּוֹ
יָגֵל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל:

through Zion, seeing that the PEOPLE do not have sufficient merit to set the process of redemption in motion. This is in line with our commentary on Isaiah, 1,27," Zion will be redeemed through justice, (seeing it has been punished for OUR sins, Zion itself not having sinned). "Those who return to it, i.e. *shaveha*, Israel, however, can only be redeemed *bitzedakah*, through an act of charity by G'd. (compare also Lamentations 4,11))

We know that G'd has promised to accelerate His timetable for redemption if we merit it. (Sanhedrin 98) The Psalmist therefore asks that the redemption should commence for the sake of Zion.

Since the redemption, if due to *achishenah*, i.e. I will accelerate its appointed time, (Isaiah 60,22) will NOT be accompanied by the *chevley mashiach*, the painful side effects of the ushering in of the messianic age, David asks that just as Zion is ENTITLED to redemption, may Israel experience it soon so as to escape the painful process discussed in Psalms 12,7.

He wants G'd to extend a helping hand to Israel, who have begun the process of doing *teshuvah*. (compare Shabbat 104 on the statement *haba letaher*, if someone is about to commence purification).

Whereas G'd wants Israel to make the FIRST move in rapprochement, the Psalmist, i.e. Israel hopes that G'd will make the first move. (compare Song of Songs 1,4 on *moshcheyni* and the author's commentary there in connection with Lamentation 5,1 "LEAD me in repentance to You".)

When, or rather if this happens, *yagel ya-akov*, Jacob will exult, Israel will rejoice over the fact that the redemption process will not be a painful one. The reason Jacob is mentioned first is, that of all the patriarchs, Jacob is most sensitive to the problems facing his descendants. (compare Lamentations 2,3, Midrash Rabba on *vayivar be-ya-akov ke-eysh lehavah*, Jacob burned like a flame". Similarly, Jacob rejoices more than even the other patriarchs when Israel experiences G'ds bounty)

Possibly, David asks that the QUALITY of redemption should be similar to the experience Israel had at Sinai, when the *Shechinah*

15 [1]*A psalm of David. LORD, who may sojourn in Your tent, who may dwell on Your holy mountain?*
[2]*He who lives without blame, who does what is right, and in his heart acknowledges the truth;*

preceded Israel's presence at the revelation. *mitziyon yeshuat yisrael*, from Zion the salvation of Israel, means, that when Israel returns it should NOT be like at the return from the Babylonian exile under Cyrus, when Israel returned (a small part of Israel) and only after building the temple the *Shechinah* –in reduced measure– appeared.

Our verse then means 1) When the Lord returns– and rebuilds the third temple– with the captives of His people, Jacob (in the celestial domains) will exult. 2) Israel will rejoice (a lesser joy than exultation) if G'ds *Shechinah* joins it only AFTER its return to Jerusalem. The Psalmist prays for the first alternative to happe, i.e. *mi yiten!*

Psalm 15.

1. Our sages have a tradition (compare something similar in Bamidbar Rabba 21,22) that G'd provides a shade and a canopy for the righteous in the hereafter, and that this is called *ohel*, tent, since it covers the righteous like a tent.

David appears to set out the conditions necessary for a *tzaddik* to merit such an *ohel* at the hands of G'd. He asks *mi yagur*, i.e. who is entitled to dwell in Your tent, on Your holy mountain? (the reference is to the place where the *tzaddikim* spend their time after their physical death and before the resurrection during the messianic era)

The term *yishkon*, will reside permanently, is in contrast to *gilgul*, the need for the souls to transmigrate and inhabit different bodies in order to atone for their shortcomings in previous lives on earth.

2. The holy spirit answers the Psalmist, listing qualifications needed for admission to the Divine *ohel*. The Psalmist is told not to be too demanding, that the requirements are easy to attain, that almost all that is necessary is NOT to be guilty of committing wrongs. We have explained in our commentary on Proverbs that one requires a great deal more effort in order to wind up in purgatory, than is needed to attain *gan eden*, the hereafter.

Supposing a person were to wind up in purgatory due to the sin of adultery, consider how such a result came about. The adulterer

טו א מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד יְהוָה מִי-יָגוּר בְּאָהֳלֶךָ מִי-יִשְׁכֹּן בְּהַר קָדְשֶׁךָ:
ב הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִים וּפֹעֵל צֶדֶק וְדֹבֵר אֱמֶת בִּלְבָבוֹ:

would first have spent long and tedious hours meeting the lady in secret, trying to seduce her, and after having succeeded he would spend anxious days or months escaping detection by the husband or the husband's detectives. Besides, he would live in terror of revenge by the cuckolded husband. All of this for the privilege of winding up in *gehinom*, purgatory.

By comparison, attaining his place in *gan eden* requires only simple honesty and a charitable disposition. When an opportunity to perform a *mitzvah*, commandment presents itself, such a person simply performs it willingly, realizing that his own origin is humble, i.e. he originated from a smelly drop of semen, as per Akavyah in Avot 3,1. He realizes that his body will end up in dust and worms. Once he keeps this in mind, he is in no danger of committing the kind of transgression that would result in his winding up in purgatory.

There are 4 stages in attaining the relative perfection of the human character. They are 1) performance of positive commandments. 2) avoidance of committing sins, which are due to one or several of 3 causes. A) pride. B) lust after bodily satisfactions such as food and drink and sexual gratification. C) greed for money.

When viewed dispassionately, it is not difficult to achieve this perfection. The Psalmist, when listing the *holech tamim*, refers to the person who performs *mitzvot*, wholeheartedly, without questioning the Creator's motives in legislating such commandments, and without allowing such considerations as whether G'd is treating him fairly, to enter his thinking when performing His commandments. Such a *holech tamim* is not upset when he observes instances of what appear to be *tzaddik vera lo*, and *rasha vetov lo*, APPARENT miscarriages of justice by G'd.

Another part of being *holech tamim* is that one does not put negative connotations on the actions of one's fellow man, does not judge him by appearances, when one is unaware of the background to such actions. At the same time, one does not have ulterior motives when one performs G'd's commandments. When one lives up to these maxims, one becomes a *po-el tzedek*, someone who acts righteously.

We know from Avot 4,11, that he who performs a *mitzvah* creates a heavenly advocate for himself, i.e. an angel. (Shabbat 32)

[3]whose tongue is not given to evil; who has never done harm to his fellow, or borne reproach for [his acts toward] his neighbor;
[4]for whom a contemptible man is abhorrent, but who honors those who fear the LORD; who stands by his oath even to his hurt;
[5]who has never lent money at interest, or accepted a bribe against the innocent. The man who acts thus shall never be shaken.

Also, *dover emet bi-l-vavo* honest speech and honesty in one's thoughts, i.e. both parts of his heart *le-vav* is a sign that one has conquered one's evil impulses.

This was a trait of Abraham of whom G'd has said (Nechemyah 9,8) "You found his (dual) heart loyal to You". (and this is why You gave him the covenant of the land of Eretz Yisrael). Abraham let the action PRECEDE his words, since action speaks more loudly than words and thoughts. (By acting in this fashion, he did not give his *yetzer hara*, evil impulse a chance to sway him.

3. Concerning the need to speak the truth, it could happen that a person who has trained himself always to speak the truth, inadvertently hurts his fellow man by TRUTHFULLY and out of habit i.e. *ragal* divulging information that is damaging to such a person. The Psalmist lists as a qualification *lo ragal al leshono lo assah lereyhu ra-ah* that one trains oneself not through force of habit to cause harm to someone else by the use of one's tongue. Such *poel tzedek* does not perform *mitzvot* which are the result of *averot*, transgressions, i.e. "did harm to his fellow man".

4. Having explained how relatively easy it is to attain perfection in the performance of positive commandments, the holy spirit now turns its attention to the negative commandments. It is easy to achieve this perfection. Our Psalm is similar to what Akavyah ben Mehahlal said in Avot 3,1. "consider 3 things and you will not likely sin". Pride is considered there as the primary cause of sin. The antidote to pride is considering one's origin and one's final destination, as does Akavyah in that Mishnah.

Similarly, the second cause of sin, i.e. lusting after bodily satisfactions, can be countered by the realization *nimass*, that since one's own body is ultimately despised, the object of one's lust (food or sex) could not possibly be more desirable than one's own body. Also, so that one does not belittle one's fellow man based on the realization that we ourselves are insignificant, despicable even, *nivzeh*

ג לֹא-רָגַל עַל-לְשֹׁנוֹ לֹא-עָשָׂה לְרֵעֵהוּ רָעָה וְחֶרְפָּה לֹא
-נָשָׂא עַל-קְרֹבוֹ:
ד נִבְזֶה בְּעֵינָיו נִמְאָס וְאֶת-יִרְאֵי יְהוָה יְכַבֵּד נִשְׁבַּע
לְהָרַע וְלֹא יָמִיר:
ה כַּסְפּוֹ לֹא נָתַן בְּנֶשֶׁךְ וְשֹׁחַד עַל-נָקִי לֹא-לָקָח עֹשֵׂה
אֵלֶּה לֹא יִמּוֹט לְעוֹלָם:

be-eynov, the Psalmist urges us to treat those who revere the Lord with respect and honour. We must never lose sight of the possibility that such a person could be of the calibre of Rabbi Eleazar son of Rabbi Shimon and his ilk. (compare Baba Metzia 84, their bodies did not turn to dust and worms)

On the other hand, the very awareness of one's inferiority due to one's origin as a "smelly drop of semen", might cause a person NOT to resist temptation (as opposed to Joseph, Genesis chapter 39, and Boaz, in Ruth chapter 3) by reasoning that since G'd has made me so inferior, He will surely make allowances for my shortcomings.

To counter this argument, Akavyah in Avot 3,1 warns that we are all accountable for all our actions and we need to act like Joseph and Boaz respectively in the face of temptation. (Bamidbar Rabba 15,16.)

This the Psalmist describes as *nishba lehara velo yamir* – that the applicant for *gan eden* is able to forswear his urge to commit something evil, *velo yamir*, to master his urges and not to change.

This is possible when one is aware of the subordinate role of the body on the one hand and the superior role of the soul on the other. In this respect man is different from all other creatures in the universe.

5. Concerning the 3rd cause of sin, greed for money, the Psalmist says that NOT lending money against interest is also a qualification for attaining *gan eden*, seeing that this is a very serious sin one has resisted. We have learned in Baba Metzia 75 that the Torah scholar MAY lend to one another foodstuffs, stipulating repayment of a larger amount of up to 20%. This is because they know the laws of interest and usury, and such arrangement is in the nature of a gift rather than interest payment. Neither party would violate the Torah commandment.

To EXCLUDE such transactions from what is discussed by the holy spirit here, the Psalmist specifies *kasspo*, his MONEY he has not GIVEN for interest, i.e. he did not even give a gift which could appear

16 [1]*A* michtam *of David. Protect me, O God, for I seek refuge in You.*
[2]*I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord, my benefactor; there is none above You."*
[3]*As to the holy and mighty ones that are in the land, my whole desire concerning them is that*
[4]*those who espouse another [god] may have many sorrows! I will have no part of their bloody libations; their names will not pass my lips.*

like interest. *veshochad al naki lo lakach*, this is the kind of person who refuses a bribe even AFTER his opponent has been adjudged innocent, *naki*, (and the bribe could not affect the judgment). Such people, *lo yimot le-olam*, will never waver when faced by the *yetzer hara*, evil urge, and will qualify easily for *gan eden*.

Psalm 16

1. The expression *amart lashem*, instead of *amarti lashem*, i.e. You (feminine) said to G'd, instead of, "I said to G'd", is peculiar. It is surprising that none of the other commentators have commented about this incongruity. I believe that it means that David is speaking to his alter ego, his soul, saying "you have said to G'd: "You are my Lord" etc.

The "soul" David spoke this to would the the one of Adam, whose reincarnation he was, according to the Zohar.

(compare our comments on Psalms 2,7 *hayom yelid-de-ticha*, as well as Psalms 3,6).

Also, David had been meant to be stillborn, had it not been for the 70 years Adam, Abraham and Joseph had allocated to him of their lives.

This was due to the fact that Adam's life had not been guilt free and he had been in need to rehabilitate himself through *gilgul*, transmigration of the soul.

The Zohar further states that the patriarchs themselves are part of Adam's soul, and that each one of them compensated for part of Adam's shortcomings, and that inasmuch as Joseph was part of his father Jacob's soul, the same applied to Joseph.

Our sages (Sotah 10) explained that *michtam* means *mach tam*, that David humbled himself, was pure and perfect (a reference to Psalm 56,1) and asked "protect me O G'd, for I trust in You", i.e. "do not let me die!".

טז א מִכְתָּם לְדָוִד שָׁמְרֵנִי אֵל כִּי-חָסִיתִי בָךְ:
ב אָמַרְתְּ לַיהוָה אֲדֹנָי אָתָּה טוֹבָתִי בַּל-עָלֶיךָ:
ג לִקְדוֹשִׁים אֲשֶׁר-בָּאָרֶץ הֵמָּה וְאַדִּירֵי כָּל חֶפְצִי-בָם:
ד יִרְבּוּ עַצְּבוֹתָם אַחֵר מָהָרוּ בַּל-אַסִיךְ נִסְכֵּיהֶם מִדָּם
וּבַל-אֶשָּׂא אֶת-שְׁמוֹתָם עַל-שְׂפָתָי:

He is speaking to his soul, explaining that the reason "I need to ask for G'd's *chessed*, kindness, is that the 70 years I have been allocated from "you" (Adam) are mere existence." I could easily lose these years if I committed the slightest wrong.

2. David speaks to his alter ego (soul), explaining that he has no guarantee of *tovah*, good experiences during these 70 years. Therefore it is easy to lose those years seeing they are already *pegumim*, blemished to begin with, since you (Adam) had once attained a stature higher than that of the ministering angels, so that you were able to name G'd by using His tetragram (compare Bereshit Rabba 17,4).

This is what the Psalmist refers to when he says *amart lashem a-donay attah*, "you have said to G'd "You are My MASTER", (since Adam had named all the other creatures first, this means G'd is master of all creatures).

However, –David continues in his dialogue with his alter ego (Adam's soul), *tovati bal alecha* you cannot boast of having done ME a favour by saving me from being stillborn, since you gave me these years AFTER you had sinned and they had become flawed, defective.

3. Rather, I have to THANK the *kedoshim asher ba-aretz*, the "holy" men on earth, i.e. the patriarchs who have given me 70 years of THEIR lives, years which were not flawed, powerful ones *kol cheftzi bam*, years in which I gladly place all my desires, i.e. which I embrace wholeheartedly.

4. I do not ONLY have to be grateful to the patriarchs, but I also have acquired the share of *gan eden* forfeited by Doag and Achitofel, who by defaming me have lost their respective share in the hereafter, as our sages have stated in Chagigah 15. They said that every person has 2 places reserved for himself, one in purgatory, i.e. *gehinom*, the other in *gan eden*, paradise. If he merits it, he also gains his fellow man's (the wicked one) place in *gan eden*. (This is based on the concept that he who causes others to sin also gets punished for the sins committed by those whom he has seduced, or who have sinned at his instigation)

[5]The LORD is my allotted share and portion; You control my fate.

The patriarchs will rejoice that these places have been allocated to me, since it is an acquisition in which they share also, since they had been recipients of Adam's soul. (the latter having previously forfeited its claim to *gan eden* subject to becoming rehabilitated. Zohar)

In the meantime however, *yirbu atzvotam*, the sufferings of those who rushed after other values i.e. *acher maharu*, will increase, seeing they have given away THEIR share in *gan eden* to me. The reason I have not revealed the identity of these people (says David) is, 1) because I do not want to cause their blood to be shed as they had intended mine to be shed when they shamed me in public. (Baba Metzia 59 and Sanhedrin 107) This refers to David's sin with Bat Sheva, *bal assich niskeyhem midam*. Compare Genesis 9,6, that "he who spills other people's blood will have his own blood spilled by other humans.

2) I will not shame THEM by mentioning their names, i.e. *bal essa et shemotam al sefatay*.

The word *shofech* spills, is similar in meaning to *harakah*, emptying, i.e. *nissuch*, the term used in this verse. David, though ENTITLED, does not kill his adversaries though the Torah (Genesis 9,6) gave him the right to do so.

5. The Talmud in Pessachim 119, describes a feast G'd will prepare for the righteous in the future. At the conclusion of the meal, G'd calls on Abraham to lead the other guests in reciting grace. Abraham declines the honour, citing the fact that he considers himself unworthy since he had sired Ishmael. Various patriarchs also decline, each one citing some other reason why he is not worthy. Finally, David volunteers to accept the honour, saying it is fitting that "I should lift the chalice of salvations and proclaim the 4 lettered name of G'd." (Psalms 116, 13)

We have explained on Psalms 116,13, that the 4 cups of wine we drink during the *seder* on the first night of Passover, correspond to the 4 letters of the tetragram and the 4 redemptions from the 4 exiles. Also, that by drinking the 4th cup we complete the final letter in G'd's name, i.e. that this symbolizes the time when G'd's war against Amalek has finally been concluded successfully. At that time He will no longer be called by His 2 lettered name *yud heh*, as per Exodus 17,16.

No doubt, the story related in Pessachim 119, does NOT relate to a physical meal in a physical world, but is an allegory, relating to the

ה יְהוָה מְנָת חֶלְקִי וְכוֹסִי אַתָּה תּוֹמִיךְ גּוֹרָלִי׃

spiritual equivalent of such a meal. The "meal" provided by G'd is similar to the "tablets containing the ten commandments" which are described in the Torah as *ma-asseh elokim*, G'd's handiwork. (Exodus 32,16) At the time G'd had fashioned the tablets and the inscription on them, (before they had been handed to Moses) they were clearly something spiritual. This is why our sages describe the writing on these tablets as *kol hashem lahavot eysh* (Psalms 29,7), that the writings were flames of fire.

It follows that the *koss*, chalice at the "meal" provided by G'd, is not an actual, physical chalice, neither is whatever is contained therein something material.

The *koss* is to be understood as the *Shechinah*, the vessel by means of which G'd's bounty to man is made available. This is the reason the numerical value of the word *koss* is 86, equal to the numerical value of the word for "G'd", Elokim. *Elokim* is one way of describing the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence.

The contents of the *koss* are the *yeshu-ot Hashem*, the various outpourings of G'd's salvations or prosperities. Only after the 4th cup, – can one talk of the "salvation" of the full (i.e. 4 lettered) name of G'd. The previous 3 cups represent only a single *yeshuah*, salvation i.e. one quarter. David, saw the Messiah as recipient and harbinger of the final "salvation". (compare Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachmeni in Baba Batra 75, who says that the Messiah will bear the name of G'd, i.e. "in his days Yehudah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely, this is the name they will call him, the G'd our righteous one" (Jeremiah 23,6)

With the help of these introductory remarks, we can address the text of our Psalm.

David says that G'd is his "share", i.e. he bears G'd's name in his capacity as the Messiah. Also, "You are my cup", i.e. sometimes "cup" is the name of a vessel containing wine; other times the word "cup" refers only to the contents, not to the vessel itself. (compare Talmud Kidushin 48, where a distinction is made between water, wine, and the cup itself respectively)

The content of the cup in our context refers to the 4 *ge-ulot*, redemptions, i.e. the 4 letters in the great name of G'd. *Kossi* then is David saying "I am the instrument, vessel, of G'd's salvations.

We find a prediction of the redemption in which all the 4 empires which serve as Israel's overlords in the various exiles will be crushed at one and the same time. (Daniel 2,35.)

If David, in the story quoted from Pessachim 119 volunteers to say grace over the cup, the idea is that ONLY he as the Messiah, can

6Delightful country has fallen to my lot; lovely indeed is my estate.
7I bless the LORD who has guided me; my conscience admonishes me at night.
8I am ever mindful of the LORD's presence; He is at my right hand; I shall never be shaken.

treat the cup as ***koss yeshu-ot***, – since the final redemption arrives only in his time.

The Psalmist here refers to a similar thought to that expressed in the Talmud Pessachim quoted above.

Even though, says David, I have to be grateful to the patriarchs for my very existence, (and how could I claim the honour which they had declined?) I turn to G'd, since the patriarchs have entrusted my fate ***gorali*** as a connecting link between themselves and me. Since you G'd have given the fate of this cup (***yeshuah***) into MY hands, it is fitting that I should proclaim the benedictions of thanksgiving to YOU. (reference to the verse following)

6. In the certainty of these future events, I feel as if they had already occurred, and this is due to two reasons. 1) The lots, i.e. *chavalim* that have been my share are pleasant. (I am satisfied with my lot) I did not suffer from the reasons which prevented Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and Joshua all to decline the honour of leading their peers in saying grace. (Pessachim 119)

Although they were all ***ne-imim***, beautiful people, my own fate has been MORE fortunate, i.e. ***chavalim naflu li***. Should you accuse me of repaying the patriarchs' favours with ingratitude, since after all they bequeathed me my very life, and that I do not accord them the honour which is their due, I reply that such an accusation would be true only if the years they had granted me had NOT resulted in my character growth.

Since, however, these years DID result in such character growth, the inheritance has been good for me, ***nachalah shafra alay***. The very fact that they had been part of me, were present within me, has contributed to my character growth. Thus the patriarchs themselves have experienced further growth vicariously. After all, it is a fact that the world NEEDS David, i.e. the Messiah. (otherwise redemption and the subsequent resurrection of the ***tzaddikim***, including the patriarchs would not occur)

7. A second reason which makes me feel as if all this had already come to pass, (i.e. my eventual fate as the redeemer) is that since I will preside over grace, holding the cup, proclaiming it as the "cup of

ו חֲבָלִים נָפְלוּ-לִי בַּנְּעִמִים אַף-נַחֲלַת שָׁפְרָה עָלָי:
ז אֲבָרֵךְ אֶת-יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר יְעָצָנִי אַף-לֵילוֹת יִסְּרוּנִי כִלְיוֹתָי:
ח שִׁוִּיתִי יְהוָה לְנֶגְדִּי תָמִיד כִּי מִימִינִי בַּל-אֶמּוֹט:

salvations", this is only because G'd is *menot chelki*, part of me, i.e. I bear his name. Obviously, he whom G'd has chosen must be fit to bless G'd. (to recite the benediction of thanksgiving)

If the sin with Bat Sheva were to be cited as proof that I am NOT worthy, I reply that my *teshuvah*, repentance has been so thorough, that not only by day but even by night (when I could have claimed the right to sleep), when my *kelayot*, kidneys advise the heart, I was concerned with penitence. (The only interior organ that man has two of are the kidneys, hence they are conceived of as the seat of both *yetzer hara* and *yetzer hatov*, the good and the evil urge, respectively. (compare Maharsha on Berachot 61)

David acknowledges that G'd had advised him NOT to ask to be tested, since he might fail the test. At any rate, he had spent both days and nights in penitence. David blames the kidneys for having misled him, and he castigates himself for not having heeded G'd's advice, i.e. *asher ye-atzani*.

A repentance which extends way into the nights is indeed a true penitence.

(compare Sanhedrin 107, that David tempted fate by asking G'd to subject him to a test as he had subjected Abraham to. David desired that the Jewish people in their prayers should not only refer to the "G'd of Abraham, G'd of Isaac and G'd of Jacob", but that his name too should be included in that list. When told that he had not been tested, as had the patriarchs, he had asked to be tested. (Psalms 26,2) When G'd subsequently tested him with Bat Sheva, he failed the test.)

8. I was so burned by that sin that ever since, "I have set the Lord before my eyes, constantly". This in order to ensure that I would not sin ever again. My whole fear concerned seduction by the heart which would cause my limbs to follow the dictates of my heart.

Normally, a person makes himself a mental image of G'd as a king, at the time he stands in prayer (when he faces G'd). David says "I adopted the habit of doing this not only at the time of prayer, but constantly". The reason is so that G'd should always by on my right, to counteract the urges of my heart which is on my left.

9*So my heart rejoices, my whole being exults, and my body rests secure.*
10*For You will not abandon me to* Sheol, *or let Your faithful one see the Pit.*
11*You will teach me the path of life. In Your presence is perfect joy; delights are ever in Your right hand.*

17 1*A prayer of David. Hear, O LORD, what is just; heed my cry, give ear to my prayer, uttered without guile.*

9. Ever since I have conducted myself in such fashion, *samach libbi*, my heart rejoiced. Normally, the heart *chomed*, desires or covets something sinful, it rejoices whereas the soul is saddened, seeing that the soul is part of the Divine and its whole striving is to do G'd's will. Also the *chomer*, all matter is headed for destruction if it follows the desires of the heart. When the heart ENJOYS complying with G'd's commandments however, then the soul EXULTS doubly, and it is also beneficial for the body. This because due to its owner's righteousness, it will not ultimately turn into worms, i.e. *af besari yishkon lavetach.* (compare Psalms 15,4 our commentary) In other words, David says, I have taken precautions to guard myself against sin. Therefore I am certain that my unfortunate lapse with Bat Sheva will not be an obstacle to my fulfilling the destiny that has been in store for me.

10. "For You will not abandon my soul to the grave". We know that the *tzaddik* upon his death is routed to *gan eden* past the portals of purgatory, and by dint of his merit enables those in purgatory who are close to having completed their time of rehabilitation to ascend together with the *tzaddik* to *gan eden.* (Zohar 3,220)

However, there are *tzaddikim* who are afraid to pass close to *gehinom*, purgatory, lest the *midat hadin*, G'd's attribute of justice should manifest itself at the time when they pass those portals and they could thus become included as victims of G'd's anger.

This is what Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai referred to when he told his students that the reason he wept was (before his impending death) that he was not sure which way they would lead him after his death (i.e. away from passing *gehinom* or in a direction which would pass the portals of *gehinom*). (Berachot 28)

David says: "I know that You will not abandon my soul to *she-aul*, i.e. purgatory; therefore I need not fear passing close by its portals. However, I plead that You will not even let me see *shachat*, i.e. a pit

ט לָכֵן שָׂמַח לִבִּי וַיָּגֶל כְּבוֹדִי אַף-בְּשָׂרִי יִשְׁכֹּן לָבֶטַח:
י כִּי לֹא-תַעֲזֹב נַפְשִׁי לִשְׁאוֹל לֹא-תִתֵּן חֲסִידְךָ לִרְאוֹת
שָׁחַת:
יא תּוֹדִיעֵנִי אֹרַח חַיִּים שֹׂבַע שְׂמָחוֹת אֶת-פָּנֶיךָ נְעִימוֹת
בִּימִינְךָ נֶצַח:

יז א תְּפִלָּה לְדָוִד שִׁמְעָה יְהוָה צֶדֶק הַקְשִׁיבָה רִנָּתִי
הַאֲזִינָה תְּפִלָּתִי בְּלֹא שִׂפְתֵי מִרְמָה:

or grave. (a higher domain than that of *gehinom*, but still one in which the flaws of the deceased have to be removed)

11. Acquaint me only with the true path of life, – not with the path of purgatory. Should You reassure me by saying that I would gain satisfaction and joy by observing that I rescue people from *gehinom*, I do not care for this, since I gain sufficient joy from seeing the *Shechinah* prior to my death, and a glimpse of all the reward in store for me in the hereafter.

David says that all he wants to see is *panecha*, Your face G'd. This is enough for me, he says. (based on Proverbs 31,25 "and she rejoices looking forward to the last day", i.e. such an *eshet chayil*, woman of valour, will have a revelation of her place in the hereafter BEFORE she dies)

David wants to remain within the precincts of the *Shechinah* from the day he dies without ANY DETOURS. "I want to remain on Your right forever".

Psalm 17

1. The use of the terms *tefillah*, *rinah* and again *tefillah* for prayer as well as the terms *shemiyah*, *hakshivah* and *ha-azanah* for hearing, need clarification. Why does the Psalmist say *shimah tzedek* instead of *shimah tzidkati*? listen to my righteousness, seeing that when he refers to *rinah* or *tefillah* he refers to *rinati*, i.e. MY prayer or *tefilati*, MY prayer?

Why does David have to emphasize that his prayer is NOT deceitful, i.e. *belo siftey mirmah*? Who would have assumed that David's prayer would be deceitful?

We know from Yalkut Shimoni on Deuteronomy 32,1, that the verb

[2]My vindication will come from You; Your eyes will behold what is right.
[3]You have visited me at night, probed my mind, You have tested me and found nothing amiss; I determined that my mouth should not transgress.

shama is used for hearing from afar, whereas the verb *ha-azin* is used for listening from nearby. This because Moses who felt close to heaven could use the term *ha-azinu* when addressing heaven, whereas he said *tishma* when he addressed earth from which he felt further removed. We observe the reverse in Isaiah 1,2, since that prophet felt himself closer to earth than to heaven.

Beyond doubt, the term *hakshavah* is similar to *ha-azanah* and also refers to hearing something that is close by, though not as near as that concerning which the term *ha-azanah* is in order.

This hymn is divided into 3 sections. One part deals with the defense of David's sin (under certain circumstances) regardless of whether the sinner had been David or someone else. G'd is exceedingly particular with people who are close to Him i.e. *u-sevivav nissarah me-od*, (Psalms 50,3) according to Yevamot 121. David indicates that he is aware of this.

He says to G'd "Hear O G'd righteousness". He refers to justification. He is not speaking here of himself as the sinner, but refers to sin as such and its relative significance had it been committed by someone other than himself. This is the reason he does NOT refer to *tzidkati*, my righteousness, but just to *tzedek*, righteousness per se.

In the second section of the Psalm, David asks G'd's protection against those who viewed his personal sin as one which could be erased only through the kind of afflictions resulting in his death, afflictions created by the very sin he had committed. Compare Isaiah 64,6, "You have delivered us into the hands of our very sins". (*vate-mugenu* You have made us be erased)

David asks protection in verse 7 of our chapter. Concerning this request he says (in verse 1) *hakshivah rinati*. He calls his prayer *rinah*, since it is in the nature of an entreaty, *shav-ah*. He believes that he is worthy to pray and to have his prayer accepted.

The third part of this hymn is David's prayer for his share in the hereafter, where he wants to be together with those who have led blameless lives on earth. (from verse 13 in this chapter)

Tefilati, is the usual formula employed when someone prays to receive goodness and kindness from G'd. We have explained on

ג מִלְּפָנֶיךָ מִשְׁפָּטִי יֵצֵא עֵינֶיךָ תֶּחֱזֶינָה מֵישָׁרִים:
ד בָּחַנְתָּ לִבִּי פָּקַדְתָּ לַיְלָה צְרַפְתַּנִי בַל-תִּמְצָא זַמֹּתִי
בַּל יַעֲבָר-פִּי:

Daniel 9,19 "hear O Lord, forgive O Lord" that inasmuch as the sinner has created distance between himself and G'd through his sins, the term *shema* is appropriate. Similarly, when Isaiah 57,19 says "peace, peace to the distant – as well as to the near ones" the word "distant", i.e. *rachok* does not refer to the physically distant, but to the sinner who is far from G'd. Also in Proverbs 15,29, Solomon says "G'd is *rachok* i.e. distant from the wicked".

Once G'd *shomey-a* hears and forgives, the distance between man and G'd shrinks. Therefore Daniel could then continue *hakshivah*, and at a still later stage *ha-azinah*. Our verse represents the gradual rapprochement taking place between man the sinner, and G'd.

Because of the fact that David introduced arguments to defend himself, there was room to deny his prayer. He therefore adds that his prayer IS NOT deceitful. He knows that he has to pray for forgiveness, that he has committed a wrong. His prayer is NOT a form of lip service whereas in his heart he believes himself to have been innocent. My arguments notwithstanding, says David, I know that I am not innocent, I do not deny that what has befallen me is just and fair.

2. David acknowledges that inasmuch as he is a leading citizen, a king etc. G'd has every reason to be especially strict with him. However, had someone else done exactly the same, that someone would not have been accused at all. This is the meaning of *milfanecha mishpati yetze*, if my judgement had not been due to my having been before You, *eynecha techezenah meysharim*, You would have viewed the action I committed as equitable, *meysharim*.

3. After all, You have examined my heart ever since I have said (Psalms 26,2) "examine me O Lord, test me and refine my kidneys and my heart". You knew that in my heart I was anxious to pass any test. Hence my failure was not due to some flaw in my character.

You may say that despite the fact that my heart is pure, my public action caused a desecration of Your name, a very great sin indeed, something I should have considered prior to allowing myself to be seduced by the *yetzer hara*, evil urge. David says, "what could I do? Since You knew of my sincerity, You should have protected me against the temptation by the *yetzer hara*, so that Your name would

[4]As for man's dealings, in accord with the command of Your lips, I have kept in view the fate of the lawless.

not be desecrated. Instead, You have done something which resulted in the publicity of the sin, namely you allowed Bat Sheva to become pregnant".

Pakadeta laylah, Your angel ***laylah*** the one who is in charge of conception and pregnancy (Niddah 16) whose task is performed nocturnally, hence his name ***laylah*** night, helped to make my sin public. ***Tzeraftani*** "You Yourself have refined me, cleansed me till You did not find a blemish on me.

The difference between ***bachan*** examined, and ***zaraf*** refined, we have explained in connection with Exodus 25,3 "gold silver and copper". "Gold" refers to Abraham, who had been examined like gold. "Silver" refers to Isaac, who had been refined like silver. When the objective is to show others that something is made of pure gold, the term ***bochen***, testing, is in order. Refinement, on the other hand is the subjection to intense fire and heat, to burn out any impurities, until the dross is completely separate from the metal. ***Bochen*** therefore, is a less severe examination than ***tziruf***.

David says, "first You examined my heart and found it wholesome. Had it NOT been so, why would You have proceeded to "cleanse", "refine" me even to the degree of ***tziruf***, an examination deeper than any I would have been capable of to perform myself?

I became aware that You had not found any fault with me. Still, You G'd are reputed to protect the feet of Your pious ones (Samuel I 2,9) and therefore You should have helped me ever since I asked to be tested against committing errors.

Our sages, – in connection with the sin of the golden calf, state, that neither Israel nor David were at the moral level that would have made their respective sins something that could have been expected. (Avodah Zarah 4)

The reason that these sins were allowed to happen was to reassure future sinners that it is possible to rehabilitate oneself through repentance. If an individual sinned, David's penitence would be cited as an example of the effectiveness of ***teshuvah***, whereas if the community sinned, the episode with the golden calf would be cited as proof of the power of repentance.

This entire statement in the Talmud is very strange. Why would G'd cause Reuben to sin in order to show Shimon how to atone for future sins? To imagine that an entire nation such as Israel would have to commit a terrible sin in order to teach an object lesson in repentance, simply boggles the imagination!

לִפְעֻלוֹת אָדָם בִּדְבַר שְׂפָתֶיךָ אֲנִי שָׁמַרְתִּי אָרְחוֹת
פָּרִיץ׃

Besides, even assuming that either Israel or David had been headed for sin, i.e. *haba letame*, (Shabbat 104) the Talmud only says that *potchim lo* that such people are allowed to proceed, that such people are not prevented; surely however, it does not mean that G'd would actively seduce such people into sinning?!

Even assuming that Israel and David had been SEDUCED into sin to teach others an object lesson, surely they would not have been punished for such sin! In fact, we observe that 3000 Israelites were executed during the golden calf episode by the Levites, whereas countless others died either by the plague, or after having drunk from the waters containing ashes of the golden calf! (compare Exodus chapter 32)

The Talmud in Yevamot 63 teaches that G'd protects even the beasts of the righteous from committing errors for which their owners could be blamed. How then could G'd allow the feet of His pious to stumble!

Why did He not prevent Israel and David from sinning?

One would have to say therefore that Israel committed another sin prior to that of the golden calf, and in this way the golden calf episode was only a follow up of its previous sin. This would then account for the fact that G'd did not protect Israel actively against committing the sin of the golden calf. Because of the previous sin, G'd would have allowed free *bechirah*, free reign to man's right to choose his conduct. The Talmud in Avodah Zarah then merely tells us that THIS HAD NOT BEEN THE CASE in the situation of either Israel prior to the golden calf or David prior to the affair with Bat Sheva.

The only reason these sins were allowed to happen was to teach future generations about the effectiveness of *teshuvah*.

4. Now we come to David's complaint. David blames 2 causes for his inability in the temptation with Bat Sheva. 1) My sin was sort of preordained, so that other sinners would learn about the effectiveness of *teshuvah* from my example. 2) Because G'd had warned that I would not prevail in such a test. (Midrash Tehillim on the previous verse) This warning had had a negative influence on me, says David. (a reference to Psalms 51,6 "so that You will be just in Your words", Sanhedrin 107)

David may have made both comments at the same time. (not 33 chapters apart as seems from the way the Tehillim is edited)

[5]*My feet have held to Your paths; my legs have not given way.*
[6]*I call on You; You will answer me, God; turn Your ear to me, hear what I say.*
[7]*Display Your faithfulness in wondrous deeds, You who deliver with Your right hand those who seek refuge from assailants.*
[8]*Guard me like the apple of Your eye; hide me in the shadow of Your wings*
[9]*from the wicked who despoil me, my mortal enemies who encircle me.*

"The reason that I observed (acted like) the path of the lawbreaker i.e. *paritz* was, *bidvar sefatecha*, at the word of Your lips, *lif-ulat adam* to teach man to act in accordance with the words of your lips, i.e. if an individual sins etc. The second reason is *bidvar sefatecha*, because You have said that I would not pass the test.

David explains that he HAD to fail, in order to prove G'd right, i.e. Psalms 51,6 *lema-an titzdak bedovrecha*, so that Your words would be shown to be righteous. In other words, David claims that he sinned for G'd's sake, – not for his own sake.

5. I do not suggest for a moment that You G'd CAUSED me to sin to provide an object lesson for the *paritz*, the lawbreaker, says David. Rather, my complaint is that had You done for me the same as You have done for other *tzaddikim* whose feet You have supported, i.e. *tamoch ashurai be-maglotecha*, to enable them to remain within Your circle, – then this sin could not have happened to me. *bal namotu pa-amay*, my feet would not have wavered.

6. Should You G'd say to me that I have brought all this upon myself by asking that Israel in their daily prayers should refer to You also as "the G'd of David", (see our quote of Psalm 16,7 based on Sanhedrin 107), David rejects this argument. He says *ani keraticha*, when I called on You with that request, – I did not imagine *ki ta-aneni el*, that You would answer me that I would not be able to pass such a test. I had expected *taaneyni el hat oznecha li shema imrati*, that You would answer me by saying "to pay careful attention to what You had to say to me", or that I should submit to a certain SPECIFIED test (much like Abraham at the *akaydah*, who was aware of the nature of the test)

My complaint is simply that since I wished to be granted the privilege of a test, You should have assisted me. Telling me, though truthfully, that I would fail, was not what I had expected to hear.

ה תָּמֵךְ אֲשֻׁרַי בְּמַעְגְּלוֹתֶיךָ בַּל-נָמוֹטוּ פְּעָמָי:
ו אֲנִי קְרָאתִיךָ כִּי-תַעֲנֵנִי אֵל הַט-אָזְנְךָ לִי שְׁמַע אִמְרָתִי:
ז הַפְלֵה חֲסָדֶיךָ מוֹשִׁיעַ חוֹסִים מִמִּתְקוֹמְמִים בִּימִינֶךָ:
ח שָׁמְרֵנִי כְּאִישׁוֹן בַּת-עָיִן בְּצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ תַּסְתִּירֵנִי:
ט מִפְּנֵי רְשָׁעִים זוּ שַׁדּוּנִי אֹיְבַי בְּנֶפֶשׁ יַקִּיפוּ עָלָי:

7. David argues that G'd's habit of granting *chessed*, loving kindness to those who have no merits, – boomerangs. The recipients of such *chessed* instead of appreciating G'd's kindness, trample on it, rebel. He therefore asks "show Your great kindness to those who *chossim*, trust in You, rather than to those who *mitkomemim biyminecha*, who rebel against Your right. (i.e. the source of Your kindness)

8. I am not asking favours for myself, says David. Merely that You protect me as the eyelid protects the apple of the eye. This is urgent, since by the light of the eye all other organs are enabled to see and follow the correct path. This is the reason the eye is protected, encased in something box like, within the flesh of the eyelids. Even the eye lashes act as protection and promote sleep by enabling the eyelids to close. If my own merit was inadequate, says David, do not do so for my sake but for the sake of all of Israel and the world which needs me, i.e. the victory of my kingdom to ensure its own continued existence.

9. During his lifetime, David asked to be protected *betzeyl kenafecha*, under the shadow of Your wings; after death, he asks *tastireyni* hide me, because of *resha-im shaduni*, the wicked people who have judged me as a wilful sinner. I am entitled to this – since by rights I was not due to commit this sin, and did so only so that *resha-im* sinners in the future *shaduni* will judge by my *teshuvah* experience that there is hope for them also. Since, however, *oyvay benefesh yakifu alay*, my enemies, the wicked, – instead of learning from my successful repentance and rehabilitate themselves, – surround me, revile my very soul, I need protection. Their claim is that only previous flaws in my soul (character) could have led me to commit the sin with Bat Sheva.

They claim that even if I had committed this sin unintentionally, this would still prove that my soul had been flawed. (compare Proverbs

[10]Their hearts are closed to pity; they mouth arrogance;
[11]now they hem in our feet on every side; they set their eyes roaming over the land.
[12]He is like a lion eager for prey, a king of beasts lying in wait.
[13]Rise, O LORD! Go forth to meet him. Bring him down; rescue me from the wicked with Your sword,
[14]from men, O LORD, with Your hand, from men whose share in life is fleeting. But as to Your treasured ones, fill their bellies. Their sons too shall be satisfied, and have something to leave over for their young.
[15]Then I, justified, will behold Your face; awake, I am filled with the vision of You.

19,2 *gam belo da-at, nefesh lo tov*) They claim that unless they were right, G'd would have denied me the opportunity to commit that sin.

10. They are so enclosed within their own fat, that they can see nothing but what their arrogant mouths speak.

11. In view of the principle that one misdeed spawns another, (Ben Azzai in Avot 4,2) we have explained there that the essence of the sin is the destructive force it creates. This force is able to bring forth other similar forces.

David says that his enemies, aware that their own conduct had been far from blameless, are now saying that they are BETTER than David. The reason is that whatever *ashureynu*, our steps, it had not led us to commit adultery. These sinful steps – of David's adversaries, – although *sevavunu* all around us NOW, had not been enough to lead them to ACTUAL sin since they had no previous record of having sinned. Only their eyes i.e. *eyneyhem* had been attracted by the prospect of adultery, (not their feet). *lintot ba-aretz* is similar to Genesis 34,1 "to look over the girls of the country". They, David's enemies, had never put their lust into practice.

12. Not only that. So far David's image had been like that of a fully matured lion, not like that of a cub who constantly is ravenous for prey, i.e. whose sexual appetite exceeds his ability to satiate. Instead of presenting the image of a successful warrior concerned with the welfare of the nation, David has now been revealed *yoshev be-misstarim*, sitting at home contemplating sexual conquests. His exterior does not match his interior. (compare Samuel II 11,1 which, for the first time, describes David sitting in Yerushalayim while his armies were at war)

יג חֶלְבָּמוֹ סָגְרוּ פִימוֹ דִּבְּרוּ בְגֵאוּת:
יא אֲשֻׁרֵנוּ עַתָּה סְבָבוּנִי עֵינֵיהֶם יָשִׁיתוּ לִנְטוֹת בָּאָרֶץ:
יב דְּמְיֻנוֹ כְּאַרְיֵה יִכְסוֹף לִטְרֹף וְכִכְפִיר יֹשֵׁב בְּמִסְתָּרִים:
יג קוּמָה יְהוָה קַדְּמָה פָנָיו הַכְרִיעֵהוּ פַּלְטָה נַפְשִׁי מֵרָשָׁע חַרְבֶּךָ:
יד מִמְתִים יָדְךָ יְהוָה מִמְתִים מֵחֶלֶד חֶלְקָם בַּחַיִּים וּצְפִינְךָ תְּמַלֵּא בִטְנָם יִשְׂבְּעוּ בָנִים וְהִנִּיחוּ יִתְרָם לְעוֹלְלֵיהֶם:
טו אֲנִי בְצֶדֶק אֶחֱזֶה פָנֶיךָ אֶשְׂבְּעָה בְהָקִיץ תְּמוּנָתֶךָ:

To remove such thoughts from the minds of his enemies, David had asked G'd to guard him like the apple of the eye. Only when David's enemies would become convinced of his sincerity, will they themselves repent their unjust accusations and return to G'd in penitence.

13. David now refers back to his request in verse 8, ***betzeyl kenafecha tastireyni***, when he spoke about the time of his death. He asks G'd not to grant the angel of death any control over him, not even to the extent that Moses had experienced this. Moses had been able to assert himself versus the angel of death in a confrontation, and to chase him away. (Deuter. Rabba 11,5)

David asks G'd to forestall the angel of death, i.e. ***kadmah panav***. In this way ***hachri-eyhu***, cast him down. As a result, ***palta nafshi merasha charbecha***, deliver my soul from the wicked who are Your sword. (David describes the angel of death as G'd's sword) He emphasizes that only from a ***sakin pagum***, a sword which is blemished by nature, i.e. that of a ***rasha***, does he not want to die, he does not mind a holy angel representing ***midat hadin*** the attribute of justice being the instrument of his death.

14. True, I would have preferred to belong to the small group of people (metim) who die directly at Your hands, ***Yadcha***, i.e. by a kiss from You. (Baba Batra 17 describes 6 people over whom the angel of death had no control)

15. If you (G'd) were to say that I demanded too much when I requested death at the hands of G'd directly, instead of being content with the assurance of my place in ***gan eden*** after death, even if at the time of death I were to experience pain, David replies "I know I

18 [1]*For the leader. Of David, the servant of the LORD, who addressed the words of this song to the LORD after the LORD had saved him from the hands of all his enemies and from the clutches of Saul.*
[2]*He said: I adore you, O LORD, my strength,*

will see Your face (after death), as a result of being righteous, i.e. *betzedek* (compare Psalms 11,7).

However, I ask that BEFORE I die, I wish to see Your picture, i.e. *be-hakitz temunatecha.*

The difference between *panim* and *temunah* is that *panim* is what man CANNOT see of G'd while in an earthly shell, i.e. alive. (compare G'd's answer to Moses in Exodus 33,23) Of *temunah* however, G'd had said (Numbers 12,8) *utemunat hashem yabit*, "a picture like image of G'd he can view", that man while on earth is granted that kind of vision.

We have explained (Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 32) that no one dies without a glimpse of the Divine prior to his death. When the person in question is not deserving, the image he perceives is like a "fleeting glimpse". When he is a *tzaddik*, righteous person however, he has a longer lasting vision, i.e. *sov-ah milirot*, he will have his fill of seeing.

Our sages (Bereshit Rabba 62) expressed this saying "that the just ones are shown the reward that is in store for them, and the souls depart *se-veyot* satisfied, and then they go to sleep. This is what David requests in our verse: "I know that AFTER death I will see *panecha*, Your face, due to my being a *tzaddik*, but I request that when I die at Your hands, before the sleep of death, I will be granted to see a *temunah* picture of You, something that is reserved for people who die at Your hands rather than through the angel of death.

Psalm 18

1. We need to understand first of all, why the Psalmist describes himself as a servant of G'd in this hymn, and why the "day" appears as the catalyst that evoked this hymn rather than the deliverance, i.e. *hatzalah*?

Besides, it is simply not true to say that David was delivered from all his enemies on the same day he was delivered from King Saul. Also, since Saul was one of his enemies, why is he portrayed as being in a different class, i.e. *mikaf kol oyvav, – umiyad Sha-ul*? David possessed many enemies long after Saul had died!

However, there are two kinds of deliverance by G'd. One category is when G'd saves the *tzaddik* from death by denying him the opportunity to commit a sin, whereas the second category of

יח א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְעֶבֶד יְהוָה לְדָוִד אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לַיהוָה אֶת-
דִּבְרֵי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת בְּיוֹם הִצִּיל-יְהוָה אוֹתוֹ מִכַּף-כָּל-
אֹיְבָיו וּמִיַּד שָׁאוּל:
ב וַיֹּאמַר אֶרְחָמְךָ יְהוָה חִזְקִי:

deliverance is when G'd saves a person's body from the sword of his enemies.

David sang this hymn in acknowledgement of BOTH categories of deliverance. He had faced two battles. One as the battle against the nations, a battle he had not been afraid of, since only the death of his body had been at stake. He did not fear that having to kill gentile adversaries could be considered sinful. (see our commentary on Psalms 5,9)

The second battle from which he had been delivered, was his confrontation with Saul. In that confrontation he had worried A) about his life, if the latter were to kill him, B) about his soul, if he would have to kill Saul. Concerning deliverance from both dangers, David thanked G'd who had enabled him to remain a loyal servant of G'd, i.e. *le-eved Hashem*. In other words, he thanked G'd for having saved his status as a servant of G'd. He also thanked G'd for having delivered his body from dangers. This is the meaning of *le-David*.

G'd could have saved David from Saul either by allowing David to kill Saul or men in his entourage, something involving possible liability for killing innocent people. (if an innocent member of Saul's entourage had been struck). G'd however, had been good to David so that he had no need to kill either Saul, G'd's annointed, or one of his men. That latter deliverance was the greater of the two in David's estimation. Hence, he says *asher dibber la-shem*, which prompted him to speak to G'd.

David had refrained from composing this hymn until the DAY arrived when he had been delivered not only from his other enemies but also from Saul WITHOUT having had to kill any of Saul's entourage. He considered THAT day as the one when he had been delivered from ALL his enemies, since deliverance from Saul was considered by him as the most important deliverance.

2. Although we have a principle *hakol bi-yedey shamayim chutz mi-yirat shamayim*, that all is in the power of heaven except fear of heaven (Berachot 33) and that a person may therefore take full credit for overcoming his evil urge and becoming a *tzaddik*, David does not do this. Rather, he acknowledges that without active assistance by G'd he could not have overcome his evil urge. (based on Sukkah 52,

3O LORD, my crag, my fortress, my rescuer, my God, my rock in whom I seek refuge, my shield, my mighty champion, my haven.

that the evil urge tries to overcome man daily, but ***haba letaher*** he who endeavors to fight him ***messayin lo*** enjoys Divine assistance. (see Psalms 37, 32–33. ***tzofeh rasha lazaddik***)

This is what David refers to when he says "I love You G'd who is my strength". He conveys that he does not claim credit for having remained an ***eved Hashem***, it is all due to ***chizki***, i.e. He has given me strength.

3. I have esteemed two favours. 1) G'd saved me from all my enemies. 2) He saved me from Saul. There are two reasons I have not included my deliverance from Saul in the general deliverance I have hinted at in verse 1.

Now I will be more specific concerning this. (says David)

We distinguish between the removal of harmful influences on the one hand, and the arrival of beneficial influences on the other hand. ***Hashem sal-i***, i.e. G'd has been my rock – against the lion and the bear (Samuel I 17,34–36). Also, He saved me from "my fortress" i.e. from Goliath. (ibid. verse 51) ***mefalti– eli tzuri***. He let me escape when my wife Michal helped me escape at night (Samuel I 19,12) Even though, at first glance, Michal appears as the one who saved David and deserves the credit, David says that the real credit goes to G'd ***tzuri***, who saved me because I trusted in Him ***echezeh bo***, and not in Michal. G'd put the thought into Michal's mind to help me escape. Or, – we need to answer the question how a man of David's calibre could break out in song when Saul died. (Moed Katan 16)

To answer this, we need to remember Samuel II 22,1– where we read "David said these words of song to G'd the day G'd had saved him from all his enemies and Saul". G'd had remonstrated with David, according to the Talmud.

As a result of this we read in Samuel II 23,1 "These are David's final words etc". From this it is evident that there had been earlier words. According to the Talmud, G'd had told David "had you been Saul, and he had been David, I would have destroyed many Davids on account of Saul".

This is the reason we find in Psalm 7,1 "an error of David, who had sung to G'd concerning the Kushite from the tribe of Benjamin".

Had Saul then been called *Kush*? Had he not been called "Saul"? However, just as a *Kush* (negro) stands out by the different colour of his skin, so did Saul stand out by reason of his superior deeds. (all

יְהוָה סַלְעִי וּמְצוּדָתִי וּמְפַלְטִי אֵלִי צוּרִי אֶחֱסֶה-בּוֹ
מָגִנִּי וְקֶרֶן יִשְׁעִי מִשְׂגַּבִּי׃

the above from Moed Katan 16) Similarly, we find Tzipporah, wife of Moses described as *ha-isha hakushit* (Numbers 12,1), the *kushite* woman. We also find (in Jeremiah 38,7) that king Tzedekiah is referred to as "the servant of the Kushite king heard", surely not a reference to a king from the land of Kush.

Similarly, in Amos 9,7, G'd is quoted as saying about Israel "are you not like Kushites to Me"? Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeyni says that the words *ne-um David, ne-um hagever*, in Samuel II 32,1 refer to the power of David's repentance, i.e. *hukam ol*, this is why he had been elevated . In verse 3 in the same chapter G'd is represented as saying "I rule man, who rules ME? – (answer) "the righteous." For I decree decrees and annul them, i.e. on account of the *tzaddik*.

Rasni explains the statement "if you had been Saul and he had been David" as meaning that "had you been born under the *mazzal* zodiac constellation of Saul, and he had been born under your *mazzal*.

Perhaps there is no need to refer to the *mazzalot* in order to understand the passage in the Talmud. Perhaps the meaning is "if you David had been Saul from the tribe of Benjamin, i.e. had NOT descended from the line of PERETZ (son of Yehudah) who had been predestined for Royalty, I would have destroyed many Davids on Saul's account. This because Saul's piety was so exceptional.

Regarding the fact that David's piety did not match that of Saul, we have the statement of the Zohar that the reason Saul died was so that he would not have to be witness to someone else occupying his throne (David). On the other hand, said G'd "had you been Saul, I would have let many Davids die for the same reason as long as he would have been the sole survivor of the house of David.

Concerning the statement "these are David's last statements", Rashi comments that we do not find David having said earlier *devarim* (seeing *devarim* are equated with prophecies). It is altogether hard to understand why Zutra ben Tuviah had difficulty with that verse (compare Moed Katan 16). Why would the meaning of *va-yedaber* have to be different from the meaning of *divrey*? Why would Zutra not have known which *rishonim*, earlier statements of David had been alluded to in that verse?

It seems to me that the meaning of *eyleh divrey David ha-achoranim* is in contrast to *harishonim*, i.e. that David had retracted from his *divrey harishonim* his earlier statements. In other words

[4]*All praise! I called on the LORD and was delivered from my enemies.*
[5]*Ropes of Death encompassed me; torrents of* Belial *terrified me;*
[6]*ropes of* Sheol *encircled me; snares of Death confronted me.*
[7]*In my distress I called on the LORD, cried out to my God; in His temple He heard my voice; my cry to Him reached His ears.*

"the *divrey ha-acharonim*, the latter words, are the TRUE sentiments of David. He referred to his error, *shigayon*, when he had mistakenly sung to G'd rejoicing at the fall of a *tzaddik* of the stature of Saul. He had come to realize that he must not belittle Saul's righteousness, that on the contrary, a great *tzaddik* is able to annul even decrees made by G'd.

This also sidesteps the question we would raise otherwise, namely how David could arrogantly state that he had demonstrated the power of repentance?

Besides, what does the power of repentance have to do with the words *Tzur Yisrael*, the rock of Israel, i.e. G'd?!

What David meant was that *Tzur Yisrael diber* had made him aware that he had had no business to celebrate Saul's defeat. David not only retracted from his song, but ACTIVELY expressed his admiration of Saul's righteousness.

David regrets having referred to Saul as a lowly *Kushite* in Psalm 7,1, a term he had employed in a derogatory sense.

When the Talmud compares instances of the use of the word *Kushi* – this could mean that Aaron and Miriam had assumed that Moses' reason for divorcing Tzipporah had been that he had come to dislike her, a woman of *kushite* i.e. inferior ancestry.

Miriam's criticism of Moses would then be that he should have thought of this before he married her, i.e. *ki isha kushit lakach*, for he had married a *kushite* woman. She had not become black skinned AFTER he married her.

A similar reason can apply to the verse we have quoted from Jeremiah. It is clear from that verse that Zedekiah was NOT viewed as righteous. (He is called by his rightful title again only AFTER he had saved the life of the prophet Jeremiah, see verse 14)

Zutra's original difficulty (in not knowing what the *devarim harishonim* earlier words of David had been) may have been that he

ד מְהֻלָּל אֶקְרָא יְהוָה וּמִן-אֹיְבַי אִוָּשֵׁעַ׃
ה אֲפָפוּנִי חֶבְלֵי-מָוֶת וְנַחֲלֵי בְלִיַּעַל יְבַעֲתוּנִי׃
ו חֶבְלֵי שְׁאוֹל סְבָבוּנִי קִדְּמוּנִי מוֹקְשֵׁי מָוֶת׃
ז בַּצַּר-לִי אֶקְרָא יְהוָה וְאֶל-אֱלֹהַי אֲשַׁוֵּעַ יִשְׁמַע
מֵהֵיכָלוֹ קוֹלִי וְשַׁוְעָתִי לְפָנָיו תָּבֹא בְאָזְנָיו׃

could not credit David with denigrating Saul anymore than he could credit Moses with denigrating Tzipporah etc.

To come back to our verse here. David's thanksgiving had ONLY been for the danger and persecution G'd had saved him from. He says that when he separated his deliverance from his other enemies and this deliverance from Saul this was because the latter deliverance contained 2 elements. A) He had been saved from death. B) *keren yishi misgavi*, my horn, i.e. my position as king established. The fact that I REFRAINED from killing, enabled me to fulfil my destiny as king. (much as Abigail had said to David concerning his intention to kill Naval. (compare Samuel I 25,31 "so that it will not become a stumbling block for your heart".)

If it had been considered a potential *michshol*, stumbling block for David to have killed Naval, a man who had nothing to his credit that is reported, – how much more of a *michshol* would killing G'd's annointed, i.e. Saul be liable to become? Therefore, deliverance from Saul WITHOUT having to kill him was a far greater deliverance for David than his having been delivered from all his other enemies.

4. Another distinction between the deliverance from my other enemies and that from Saul, is this, says David. It was easy to be delivered from my other enemies, all I had to do was *mehullal ekro Hashem*, i.e. declare my praises for G'd, – *umin oyvay ivashe-a*, and immediately I would be saved from my enemies.

5. Not so, however, in the war with Saul. I was involved in a battle for physical survival as well as for spiritual survival, i.e. in a battle against the *yetzer hara*, the evil urge. I was concerned that Saul should not kill me, whereas simultaneously I worried about the temptation to kill Saul in "self defense". The *yetzer hara* is called here *nachaley be-li-ya-al* i.e. streams of unworthy feelings which terrorised me.

6. The ropes, resp. sufferings of *she-aul*, purgatory would have surrounded me (had it not been that G'd was my *chizki* (verse 2)) They would have made me act pre-emptively, *kadmuni*, by killing Saul, *mokshey mavet*, because I had been entrapped by death. (under the

[8]Then the earth rocked and quaked; the foundations of the mountains shook, rocked by His indignation;
[9]smoke went up from His nostrils, from His mouth came devouring fire; live coals blazed forth from Him.
[10]He bent the sky and came down, thick cloud beneath His feet.
[11]He mounted a cherub and flew, gliding on the wings of the wind.

maxim in Sanhedrin 72 "if someone is out to kill you, arise and kill him first")

7. Therefore I thank the Lord who saw me teetering on the brink, *batzar li*, when I was in distress. Concerning my physical danger, I had called on *hashem*; concerning my spiritual/moral danger, I prayed to *elokay*. (since I would no longer be able to call Him MY G'd if I had succumbed to the urgings of the *yetzer hara*.

Concerning the former, *yishma me-heychalo koli*, He heard my voice from His sanctuary. Concerning my plea not to have to kill Saul, my prayer went straight to His ears, i.e. *shav-ati lefanav tavo le-oznav*, not like other prayers which are relayed to G'd via angels. (Midrash Tehillim 19,2)

8–9. Although – legally – David knew he could kill Saul in self defense, as we have proved from Sanhedrin 72, we have traditions that G'd punishes those who carry out His judgements. Ezekiel 25,15, Gittin 56, Shabbat 149, all describe either retributions, or G'd's displeasure with those who allowed themselves or even volunteered to become G'd's tools in punishing either individuals or the Jewish people. In verses 8–9 David describes graphically how G'd reacts when humans act as His executioner.

10. Having stated that he sung to the Lord in appreciation of being saved in a manner which made it unnecessary for him to inflict hurt or death on Saul, so that he could continue to call the Lord "my G'd", – David now refers to the second half of his request, i.e. *shav-ati lefanav tavo be-oznav*, which suggests G'd's Presence on earth, – and we do not even notice – how could He have "dipped the heavens, descended with dark clouds under His feet"? Surely such a statement implies that He is NOT present on earth itself?

On the one hand we are told in Exodus 19,3 that Moses ascended to G'd (because He was NOT on earth), whereas on the other hand in Exodus 19,20 we are told that He descended on the mountain, i.e. on earth?

According to the Mechilta Yitro 4 the answer is that G'd bent

ח וַתִּגְעַשׁ וַתִּרְעַשׁ הָאָרֶץ וּמוֹסְדֵי הָרִים יִרְגָּזוּ וַיִּתְגָּעֲשׁוּ
כִּי חָרָה לוֹ׃
ט עָלָה עָשָׁן בְּאַפּוֹ וְאֵשׁ מִפִּיו תֹּאכֵל גֶּחָלִים בָּעֲרוּ
מִמֶּנּוּ׃
י וַיֵּט שָׁמַיִם וַיֵּרַד וַעֲרָפֶל תַּחַת רַגְלָיו׃
יא וַיִּרְכַּב עַל-כְּרוּב וַיָּעׇף וַיֵּדֶא עַל-כַּנְפֵי-רוּחַ׃

heaven and the upper heavens on top of Mount Sinai, enabling G'd to be in heaven and on earth simultaneously. At first glance this seems to contradict David who describes G'd as listening to his prayer BECAUSE He is on earth.

If so, why did G'd need to lower the heavens at the time of *matan torah*, the revelation at Mount Sinai? Besides, where were the dark clouds, i.e. *arafel* to separate between G'd and His "feet" on earth? David therefore says not to bother about these problems, but to recall what Israel had seen at the time, i.e. that there had been a cloud which separated the purely spiritual G'd from actual contact with the earth. The question of G'd's presence on earth remains open, therefore.

11. The answer is, David says, that AFTER the revelation at Mount Sinai, *vayarkev al keruv*, He rode on the *keruv*, i.e. the tabernacle and the temple respectively both of which contained the *keruvim* on the lid of the holy ark. (compare Yalkut Shir Hashirim 917 on verse 1,11)

We also know from Leviticus 9,24, "the people saw and shouted", that they had SEEN the *Shechinah* Divine Presence in the tabernacle. (the fire that had consumed Nadav and Avihu)

We know furthermore that the *Shechinah* departed *va-yaof*, flew away when the temple was destroyed. All of this proves the Presence of the Divine, the spiritual on terrestrial earth.

This appears to contradict verse 10, that the *arafel* dark cloud SEPARATED between celestial and the terrestrial?!

The fact is that G'd's *Shechinah* did not rest PRIMARILY between the wings of the *keruvim* (Exodus 25,20–22), but that the "wings" referred to are the *ruach* of man, i.e. the spiritual in man.

When G'd said "they shall make a residence for Me, and I shall dwell amongst them" (Exodus 25,8) the meaning is that G'd i.e. the Divine Spirit should dwell in the sanctuary called "man". *heychal hashem hemah.* (Jeremiah 7,4) By means of man becoming the *merkavah*, the "carrier", G'd comes to dwell between the *keruvim.*

12He made darkness His screen; dark thunderheads, dense clouds of the sky were His pavilion round about Him.
13Out of the brilliance before Him, hail and fiery coals pierced His clouds.
14Then the LORD thundered from heaven, the Most High gave forth His voice– hail and fiery coals.

The *keruvim* are called the *kanfey ruach* the "extensions" or wings of the spirit.

We have explained this on Isaiah 59,2, i.e. "your sins have created a chasm between you and G'd". Even while in the body, the soul of the *tzaddik* is not separate from its root, its Divine origin. Whenever G'd sends angels to earth, their essence remains in the celestial spheres. Were this not so, His entourage in the celestial regions would become defective, if, say Michael or Gabriel were busy in Sodom, one destroying the city, the other saving Lot and family respectively.

Similarly, the soul's celestial root remains in heaven at all times. Its extensions, i.e. *kanfeyhem* wings, are what are active within man. The reason man can be *merkavah* carrier of the Divine is only because of the UNRUPTURED tie between the soul within his body whose root is in the celestial regions.

Had there not been such a relationship, the prophet would not have been able to describe man's sins as rupturing man's relationship with G'd.

David says, – though G'd indeed resides on earth, this is by virtue of the *kenafayim* wings, i.e. His extension in the spirit of man.

Within the spirit of man the *Shechinah* is able to find *monauach* a resting place and thus man becomes *heychal Hashem* a sanctuary of G'd.

When Israel is deserving, – a more visible symbol of this is G'd's Presence between the wings of the *keruvim* in the tabernacle or the temple. However, the principal manifestation of the *Shechinah* on earth is its presence within the spirit of man.

12. David explains that whereas on the one hand the *Shechinah* is on earth, this is not to be understood literally, but it means that it is carried on the wings of His angels. (agent) One could challenge this by saying that the connection between G'd and His people was hidden in darkness at the time of *matan torah*, the revelation at Mount Sinai when He enveloped the mountain in dark clouds. (Exodus 19,16–18, and 20,18)

יב יָשֶׁת חֹשֶׁךְ סִתְרוֹ סְבִיבוֹתָיו סֻכָּתוֹ חֶשְׁכַת-מַיִם עָבֵי שְׁחָקִים:

יג מִנֹּגַהּ נֶגְדּוֹ עָבָיו עָבְרוּ בָּרָד וְגַחֲלֵי-אֵשׁ:

יד וַיַּרְעֵם בַּשָּׁמַיִם יְהוָה וְעֶלְיוֹן יִתֵּן קֹלוֹ בָּרָד וְגַחֲלֵי-אֵשׁ:

David explains that those clouds were like curtains – on the outside of which the *Shechinah* was not visible – in order to ensure that the people would not be blinded etc. However, G'd was there, in the *ananey hakavod*, the clouds of glory, here referred to as *cheshchat mayim, avey shechakim.*

Every time it rains, i.e. when there are dark clouds, this is a reminder of G'd's *Shechinah* on earth.

13. Due to the brightness surrounding His Presence on earth, the hail, i.e. the water (during the 8th plague in Exodus 9, 24) did not extinguish the fire contained within it, neither did the fire melt the ice, since one element was not allowed to dominate another (fire versus water). Our sages have explained this principle in Shemot Rabbah 2,5, saying that the reason G'd spoke out of the most insignificant of plants was to demonstrate that His Presence is everywhere on earth. G'd made peace between water and fire so that they combined to be heaven and earth. This in explanation of the phenomenon of the burning bush in Exodus 3,2 where we find the fire NOT consuming the bush. Only when G'd wills it, does one element overpower the other. G'd has not allowed nature free reign in this respect.

14. Should one argue that the phenomenon of the plague of hail does NOT prove that the *Shechinah* is on earth, but rather that G'd despatched the fire from the celestial spheres ordering the fire to enter the hail, and that this is the only reason they existed side by side harmoniously, the wording of the passage makes it clear that this was not the case. (Exodus 9,22–25)

Moses is told "stretch your hand over the heavens and there will be hail". It does NOT say that there would be hail AND fire. Afterwards we read "1) there was hail, 2) the sounds of G'd, 3) and fire contained within the hail". Why had the fire not been mentioned at the outset? This was only to teach that the hail came first. David says that G'd thundered first, as a result of which the hail materialised, and only subsequently *gachaley aysh* coals of fire. Only after G'd had made it possible to hear the sound, i.e. *kolo*, did the fire join the hail. Clearly, water and fire co-operated as a result of the

15*He let fly His shafts and scattered them; He discharged lightning and routed them.*
16*The ocean bed was exposed; the foundations of the world were laid bare by Your mighty roaring, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.*
17*He reached down from on high, He took me; He drew me out of the mighty waters;*
18*He saved me from my fierce enemy, from foes too strong for me.*
19*They confronted me on the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support.*
20*He brought me out to freedom; He rescued me because He was pleased with me.*
21*The LORD rewarded me according to my merit; He requited the cleanness of my hands;*
22*for I have kept to the ways of the LORD, and have not been guilty before my God;*
23*for I am mindful of all His rules; I have not disregarded His laws.*

presence of the *Shechinah*. *Minogah negdo* The ramification, i.e. *hitpashtut* of the *Shechinah negdo* against elements which are normally opposites such as fire and water, enabled these opposites to co-exist.

15. David now commences to list the acts of salvation for him by G'd – going back as far as when Lot's daughters had been saved from Sodom – for one of them to become his ancestor, i.e. Ruth the Moabite. David was partially descended from Lot as we read in Bereshit Rabbah 50,10 referring to Psalms 89,21 "I FOUND My servant David. Where? In Sodom. (on Genesis 19,15) David is saying that the confusion He created when *va-yehumem* "He despatched His arrows against Sodom and stunned them", was also in order to prevent the people from leaving the city.

16. Then the *afikey mayim*, the river beds became visible. Bereshit Rabbah says that through G'd's anger so much water flooded Sodom that the foundations of the earth beneath it were laid bare, i.e. *vayigalu mossdot tevel* so that Sodom was turned upside down. The mountain roots came to the surface whereas its buildings became the bedrock.

17. At that time, while G'd was so angry, He sent an angel

טו וַיִּשְׁלַח חִצָּיו וַיְפִיצֵם וּבְרָקִים רָב וַיְהֻמֵּם:
טז וַיֵּרָאוּ אֲפִיקֵי מַיִם וַיִּגָּלוּ מוֹסְדוֹת תֵּבֵל מִגַּעֲרָתְךָ
יְהוָה מִנִּשְׁמַת רוּחַ אַפֶּךָ:
יז יִשְׁלַח מִמָּרוֹם יִקָּחֵנִי יַמְשֵׁנִי מִמַּיִם רַבִּים:
יח יַצִּילֵנִי מֵאֹיְבִי עָז וּמִשֹּׂנְאַי כִּי-אָמְצוּ מִמֶּנִּי:
יט יְקַדְּמוּנִי בְּיוֹם אֵידִי וַיְהִי יְהוָה לְמִשְׁעָן לִי:
כ וַיּוֹצִיאֵנִי לַמֶּרְחָב יְחַלְּצֵנִי כִּי חָפֵץ בִּי:
כא יִגְמְלֵנִי יְהוָה כְּצִדְקִי כְּבֹר יָדַי יָשִׁיב לִי:
כב כִּי-שָׁמַרְתִּי דַּרְכֵי יְהוָה וְלֹא-רָשַׁעְתִּי מֵאֱלֹהָי:
כג כִּי כָל-מִשְׁפָּטָיו לְנֶגְדִּי וְחֻקֹּתָיו לֹא אָסִיר מֶנִּי:

yishlach nimarom, to take me outside (i.e. by saving Lot and his daughters).

Later, He drew me from *mayim rabim*, mighty waters when Nachshon prince of Yehudah (my paternal ancestor) waded into the *yam suf*, sea of reeds up to his neck and was saved when the sea split. (Yalkut Shimoni Shemot 234)

David established his claim to the kingdom by virtue of Nachshon's act of faith at the sea. (compare Psalms 69,2)

18. The next time, G'd saved me from my enemy, i.e. Goliath, and from those who hated me such as Doag and the Zippim.

19. They had prepared to confront me on the day of my calamity, i.e. while I was in flight, and G'd became my support. (Samuel I 23,1 and 19 respectively)

20. He led me into wide open space, – after I had been trapped in *Ke-ilah* (Samuel I chapter 23) *ki chafetz bi*, G'd demonstrated His liking for me. He did not do so because I deserved it. David says that, in the event

21. you want to interpret my rescue from *Ke-ilah* as a compensation for my having refused to kill Saul when I had the chance, i.e. *ke-vor yaday* when my hands were clean (in a moral sense).

22. I am NOT claiming credit for observing the ways of the Lord. If I did not act evilly, *me-elokay* this emanated from my G'd. (who gave the strength to resist temptation)

23. Had this not been so, all His social laws which were in front of my eyes at the time, would not have restrained me, since legally I

24I have been blameless toward Him, and have guarded myself against sinning;
25and the LORD has requited me according to my merit, the cleanness of my hands in His sight.
26With the loyal, You deal loyally; with the blameless man, blamelessly.
27With the pure, You act purely, and with the perverse, You are wily.
28It is You who deliver lowly folk, but haughty eyes You humble.
29It is You who light my lamp; the LORD, my God, lights up my darkness.
30With You, I can rush a barrier, with my God I can scale a wall;

was entitled to kill Saul in self defense. Nonetheless Your *chukkim*, i.e. the laws the rationale of which we do not know, I did not ignore, *lo assir*, I did not depart from.

24. Therefore I remained *tamim*, wholesome, pure. I reasoned that perhaps G'd has a reason why I am persecuted and that I am simply unaware of that reason; or it is a trial to judge my character by. If so, I should not become the instrument to pay back Saul for his unjust pursuit of me. Also, perhaps I have been guilty of some sin, and THAT sin would then become the catalyst to commit other sins, namely to kill someone whom G'd has anointed.

By conducting myself like a *tamim*, I guarded myself against further sin, i.e. *va-eshtamer me-avoni.*

25. Because of this, G'd repaid me according to my righteousness. He dealt with me as if my righteousness had originated totally from within me, without any assistance from Him. He did so, *leneged eynav*, even though what goes on within me is constantly in front of His eyes.

26. Although I have a complaint, (meaning I could have acted differently because of this complaint) namely, that if You G'd are practicing pity, should You not concentrate Your pity on the pious? i.e. *im chassid titchassad*? My gut feeling is "why do You treat Saul so well?

27. After all, my instinct, i.e. *yetzer* keeps telling me *im ikesh titpatal*, that he who insists on seeking my life, I should pay him back his corruption, his devious ways. (David's instinct speaking to him). All this is based on *leneged eynav*, that G'd is aware of the TRUE state

כד וְאֶהְיֶה תָמִים עִמּוֹ וָאֶשְׁתַּמֵּר מֵעֲוֹנִי׃
כה וַיָּשֶׁב-יְהוָה לִי כְּצִדְקִי כְּבֹר יָדַי לְנֶגֶד עֵינָיו׃
כו עִם-חָסִיד תִּתְחַסָּד עִם-גִּבֹּר תָּמִים תִּתַּמָּם׃
כז עִם-נָבָר תִּתְבָּרָר וְעִם-עִקֵּשׁ תִּתְפַּתָּל׃
כח כִּי אַתָּה עַם-עָנִי תוֹשִׁיעַ וְעֵינַיִם רָמוֹת תַּשְׁפִּיל׃
כט כִּי-אַתָּה תָּאִיר נֵרִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהַי יַגִּיהַּ חָשְׁכִּי׃
ל כִּי בְךָ אָרֻץ גְּדוּד וּבֵאלֹהַי אֲדַלֶּג-שׁוּר׃

of affairs, WHY does He practise *chessed*, loving kindness with Saul? Why does He not treat him as an *ikesh*, stubborn person?

28. Another argument of mine which G'd is aware of, is that my *yetzer* argued that I should kill Saul and thereby save his men from spilling innocent blood (mine and that of my men), since Saul's men had been incited by him against me. By Saul's death, his men would have realized that You humble him who has haughty eyes. The fact that I did not follow these urgings of my *yetzer* are why You gave me credit for being righteous in my own right.

29. We know from Midrash Rabbah Deut. 44, that the meaning of the verse (Psalms 31,6) "I place my spirit in Your hands etc." refers to the statement of our sages "My light is in your hands and your light is in My hand" (based on Proverbs 6,23) for one candle is a *mitzvah*, whereas the whole Torah is equated with the source of all light". What Solomon wanted to teach is that if we tend a single light of G'd, i.e. we observe one *mitzvah*, He in turn will look after our life. *asher beyado nefesh kol chay*, he who holds in his hand the life of all mankind, i.e. He holds the key to all our lives=light.

David may be saying "not only are You G'd watching over my *neri*, light, i.e. life, – You even brighten my darkness. This means that You are doing everything. (my own input is minimal) *Choshchi*, darkness always symbolizes either sin, or the absence of *mitzvah* performance.

30. Both when I ran away to the Philistines (*arutz gedud*) to Israel's enemies, and when I jumped from the window to escape Saul (instead of confronting him and killing him) You lit my light, i.e. You gave me the additional spiritual resources NOT to take the easy way out by killing my enemy.

(Samuel I 17,48) Also when You gave me the courage to face Goliath. But still, I ran from trouble to trouble.

31*the way of God is perfect; the word of the LORD is pure; He is a shield to all who seek refuge in Him.*
32*Truly, who is a god except the LORD, who is a rock but our God?—*
33*the God who girded me with might, who made my way perfect;*
34*who made my legs like a deer's, and let me stand firm on the heights;*
35*who trained my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze.*

Removing me from the place of darkness, *yagiah choshchi*, I thank You for, since *ta-ir neri*, i.e. lighting my own light on such occasion by killing Saul and removing darkness would have seemed so much easier.

31. This verse expresses David's conviction not to rely on miracles; that G'd prefers solutions that do not involve the supernatural.

David could have been faulted for fleeing from Saul instead of relying on the fact that he had already been anointed king by the prophet Samuel, (Samuel I 16, 13) and had been promised that he would rule. Also he had become the recipient of the holy spirit.

On the other hand, his fear of killing Saul was not an adequate reason to flee, since self defense would have been quite admissible. Therefore, David answers such criticism by saying *ha-el tamim darko*, G'd prefers to do things according to natural law. Although *imrat Hashem tzerufah*, G'd's promise to me had been of an unqualified nature, *magen hoo*, He is a shield *lechol hachossim bo* to all who trust in Him. This means that it is better to rely on Him personally, than on His promises, i.e. when He would have to do things unnaturally in order to keep His promises.

Besides, – one's sins might nullify G'd's promises, as we know from Jacob, who displayed fear of this prior to meeting Esau, though he too had been armed with G'd's assurances. (Berachot 4)

32. Should one counter, that in David's case he had the additional knowledge that G'd had already expressed His displeasure with Saul by telling him that he would lose his throne, (Samuel I 15,26), and that the attribute of justice had therefore become operational against him already, David explains that the attribute of justice is always tempered by the attribute of mercy *ki mi eloka mibaladey kel*? is there then justice without mercy?

Saul may have merits which entitle him to protection by the

לא הָאֵל תָּמִים דַּרְכּוֹ אִמְרַת יְהוָה צְרוּפָה מָגֵן הוּא לְכֹל
הַחוֹסִים בּוֹ:
לב כִּי מִי אֱלוֹהַּ מִבַּלְעֲדֵי יְהוָה וּמִי-צוּר זוּלָתִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ:
לג הָאֵל הַמְאַזְּרֵנִי חָיִל וַיִּתֵּן תָּמִים דַּרְכִּי:
לד מְשַׁוֶּה רַגְלַי כָּאַיָּלוֹת וְעַל בָּמוֹתַי יַעֲמִידֵנִי:
לה מְלַמֵּד יָדַי לַמִּלְחָמָה וְנִחַתָּה קֶשֶׁת-נְחוּשָׁה זְרוֹעֹתָי:

attribute of mercy. Besides, *u—mi Tzur*? who can be rock-like certain that he has not forfeited G'd's promise through some sin, except G'd Himself?

33. Up until now, says David, I have DESCRIBED mostly how YOU G'd saved me from being killed by Saul and his men by Your removing the problem from me. This is in contrast to my gentile enemies, where You have enabled me to inflict defeats on THEM instead of my merely escaping them.

G'd has girded me with valour, *chayil*, while simultaneously enabling me to remain straightforward *tamim* on my way. I consider the ability to defeat my gentile enemies as much an act of Divine kindness as I do the ability to resist the impulse to kill Saul or his men and to suffer persecution by him.

Or, – David says that the true hero is he who is in control of his basic urges. (Avot 4,1) We find this illustrated in Yuma 69 when removal of the *yetzer hara* from the world is being discussed. David describes the *temimut*, as even greater than valour, courage in battle. The point he makes is that ONLY the person who IS possessed of courage and martial skills can claim credit for acting out of *temimut* and restraining his talents. He who is unskilled in the art of war, and has no ALTERNATIVE but to put his trust in G'd, cannot claim credit for such behaviour.

We have explained this on Psalm 29,11 when David asks G'd for the blessing of peace for Israel, JUST BECAUSE *Hashem oz le-ammo yiten*, G'd has granted Israel physical prowess. Here too, David thanks G'd by saying "not only has He girded me with valour, but *vayiten tamim darki*, He gave me the strength to go straight."

34. Though He has made my feet fleetfooted like the hind, – when the war is *al bamotay*, on my own heights, i.e. within the land of Israel, – against Jews at that *ya-amideni*, He has made me stand, i.e. restrain myself from killing Jews.

35. As He has done with *raglay*, my feet (verse 34), so He has

36 *You have given me the shield of Your protection; Your right hand has sustained me, Your care has made me great.*
37 *You have let me stride on freely; my feet have not slipped.*
38 *I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not turn back till I destroyed them.*
39 *I struck them down, and they could rise no more; they lay fallen at my feet.*
40 *You have girded me with strength for battle, brought my adversaries low before me,*

done with my hands and arms, – in order to prevent me from sinning through killing the innocent in self defense.

36. We have explained in Genesis 15,11 when "Abraham chased away the vulture" (compare our commentary on Psalms 2,6) that David wanted to exterminate the gentile nations all at once, i.e. the "vulture" = David descended on the *pegarim*, carcasses. G'd had shown Abraham that the nations who would attack Israel are symbolized by the carcasses of the animals Abraham had been asked to sacrifice. Abraham chased "David" (vulture) away. The meaning is that Abraham preferred for Israel in the future to have to undergo exile to expiate its sins, rather than to have to undergo punishment in purgatory. Therefore, Abraham foiled David.

The source of this statement (Bereshit Rabbah 44,21) seems to be our verse here. G'd had promised the patriarchs that David, in addition to his kingdom during his normal life on earth, would be great again in the future (Psalms 72, 8–17) "May he have dominion from ocean to ocean, from the river to the ends of the earth; the inhabitants of the wilderness, the kings of Tarshish etc. will all pay tribute to him etc. etc."

David will be this Messiah, this king referred to in Psalm 72. At that time will be fulfilled Psalm 2,8 "ask of Me and I will grant it, nations will become your inheritance, your possessions will extend to the ends of the earth etc." We find in numerous instances, that the greatest guarantee we have that we will be redeemed is that G'd's *Shechinah* will be redeemed, since He will not abandon it forever to remain in exile.

This will come about during the Messianic era, (Isaiah 63,4), G'd's day of revenge.

David refers to this here, when he says "You have given me a

לו וַתִּתֶּן-לִי מָגֵן יִשְׁעֶךָ וִימִינְךָ תִסְעָדֵנִי וְעַנְוָתְךָ
תַרְבֵּנִי:
לז תַּרְחִיב צַעֲדִי תַּחְתָּי וְלֹא מָעֲדוּ קַרְסֻלָּי:
לח אֶרְדּוֹף אוֹיְבַי וְאַשִּׂיגֵם וְלֹא-אָשׁוּב עַד כַּלוֹתָם:
לט אֶמְחָצֵם וְלֹא-יְכְלוּ קוּם יִפְּלוּ תַּחַת רַגְלָי:
מ וַתְּאַזְּרֵנִי חַיִל לַמִּלְחָמָה תַּכְרִיעַ קָמַי תַּחְתָּי:

shield (guarantee), namely *yishecha*, Your own redemption. This is my assurance that Your enemies will no longer harass me. (at that time) Not only have You proven to be my shield in the past, but in order to become victorious *yemincha tisadeyni*, Your right will support me, and You will grant me a large measure of Your humility. Since I shall be in need of Your threefold assistance anyways also in the Messianic era, David says, and I would be unable to accomplish anything without You, why not let me do all this already at this time?

37. If the reason is that I have to prove myself first as king, not like Saul who has failed and who has therefore been displaced, I have passed the test for a long time, i.e. You have made me take a long step *tarchiv tz-a-adi tachtoy*. David views the period between the time he had been anointed by Samuel until he actually assumed the throne as one during which he had taken only a single step. Since a lot of time had elapsed during this interval, he said "You have made me take a large step".

Allegorically speaking, although I stepped over the head of Saul, – having already been anointed to become his successor – I resisted the opportunity to crush him and assume the throne in practice. I have therefore proven my worthiness. Why, therefore, do You G'd want to wait with crushing YOUR enemies i.e. the gentile nations, till *yom nakam* the day of retribution? (Isaiah 63,4)

38. Let me pursue my enemies now and catch them and not return from fighting them until they have perished!

39. The reason I am not satisfied with merely humbling them, but want their destruction, *kalotam*, is, so that any remnants cannot again become a snare, as have the Canaanites whom Joshua failed to kill at the time Israel conquered Eretz Yisrael. Therefore, it would not be good enough *emchatzem velo yuchlu kum*, if I would smash them in a way that would prevent them from rising only temporarily. They would then only fall under my feet, *yiplu tachat raglay*, and remain like a pit, a constant potential hazard for me.

40. Please do not consider my request to destroy the forces of

41made my enemies turn tail before me; I wiped out my foes.
42They cried out, but there was none to deliver; [cried] to the LORD, but He did not answer them.
43I ground them fine as windswept dust; I trod them flat as dirt of the streets.
44you have rescued me from the strife of people; You have set me at the head of nations; peoples I knew not must serve me.
45At the mere report of me they are submissive; foreign peoples cower before me;

Amalek already now, something – which You have made my task in my capacity as the Messiah –, as something too demanding to ask for. There are three kinds of enemies I have to be concerned with. 1) Those who attack me personally. 2) Those who are called "my enemies", but in fact make me the focal point of their hatred of the Jewish people. 3) Those who are not termed my "enemy", but who are full of hatred. I need Your help concerning only one of these 3 groups, hence my request is not all that great.

Concerning those who attacked me, I need not ask Your help, seeing *va-te-azreni chayil lamilchamah*, You have already girded me with bravery in war, i.e. given me the means to defend myself. I know already *tachria kamay* that You will make those who arise against me kneel. This takes care of group number one.

41. Also concerning the second group, the *oyvim*, I need not ask Your help, since it has been promised to me ever since Jacob blessed Yehudah my ancestor when You promised that "your hand will be on the neck of your enemies", i.e. that I will vanquish my enemies. (Genesis 49,8)

There remains only the third group, *mesan-ay* those who hate me, regarding whom I ask Your help, *atzmitem* so that I can suppress them. Therefore, please do not deny my request (verse 38) *erdof* that I shall pursue them etc. since all I have in mind is this last group of adversaries. (Amalek's hatred is always viewed as unprovoked by Israel)

42. Should You warn me that these people might call on Your attribute of mercy and be spared, seeing that their measure of guilt is not yet full, I say that they do not deserve such consideration since *yeshav-u ve-eyn moshia.* Their appeal to You is not based on *emunah* on honest belief in You. They only appeal to You after their

מא וְאֹיְבַי נָתַתָּה לִּי עֹרֶף וּמְשַׂנְאַי אַצְמִיתֵם:
מב יְשַׁוְּעוּ וְאֵין מוֹשִׁיעַ עַל-יְהוָה וְלֹא עָנָם:
מג וְאֶשְׁחָקֵם כְּעָפָר עַל-פְּנֵי רוּחַ כְּטִיט חוּצוֹת אֲרִיקֵם:
מד תְּפַלְּטֵנִי מֵרִיבֵי עָם תְּשִׂימֵנִי לְרֹאשׁ גּוֹיִם עַם לֹא-
יָדַעְתִּי יַעַבְדוּנִי:
מה לְשֵׁמַע אֹזֶן יִשָּׁמְעוּ לִי בְּנֵי-נֵכָר יְכַחֲשׁוּ-לִי:

own deities have failed them, i.e. *ve-eyn moshia*. David is so certain that such appeals will go unanswered that he describes them as if they had occurred already, i.e. *velo anam*, instead of as *velo ya-anem*, He will not answer them.

43. There is another possible reason to delay punishment of Amalek namely, to have them exhaust the reward for any possible merit they possess in this world, so that when the time comes to punish them they will have been squeezed dry of any life giving moisture.

We find such a metaphor in Daniel 2,34–36 when he describes how "all crumbles, becomes like chaff and blows away into nothingness". To justify such fate to happen to Amalek, it may be necessary to delay his downfall. If Amalek were to be wiped out on earth NOW already, instead of disappearing completely, their dead bodies would leave a stench in the courtyards for a long time. It is therefore better for Israel in the long run, that Amalek be destroyed in such a way that its death leaves no unpleasant residue.

David rejects this argument by saying "I know that if I wait till the Messiah is supposed to arrive, I can crush and crumble them like dust before the wind". However, *ketit ruach chutzot arikem*, I prefer to cast them out like the mire in the yards. I am willing to suffer them like mire which when mixed with the dust prevents the wind from carrying away the dust. Likewise, I am willing to put up with the stench of the decaying bodies of the Amalekites if only they were to die already now! I myself *arikem*, will empty the yards from these decaying bodies!

44. By allowing me to wipe out Amalek now, You would deliver me automatically from those amongst my people who quarrel with me. They cannot tolerate having to be ruled by me, seeing they view themselves as superior to me. If You were to make me king over the gentile nations, *tessimeyni lerosh goyim*, instead of king over Israel, they would no longer have any cause to quarrel with me! In other

46foreign peoples lose courage, and come trembling out of their strongholds.
47The LORD lives! Blessed is my rock! Exalted be God, my deliverer,
48the God who has vindicated me and made peoples subject to me,
49who rescued me from my enemies, who raised me clear of my adversaries, saved me from lawless men.
50For this I sing Your praise among the nations, LORD, and hymn Your name:

words *am lo yadati ya-avduni*, a people whom I have not known would serve me!

45. Should someone argue that if I want to destroy all the gentile nations, how can I wind up being king over them, and how can "a foreign nation" serve me?

David answers *leshema ozen yisham-u li*. "We have a tradition (Massechet Sofrim 21,9) that in Messianic times, all the Chaldaens who have ever oppressed Israel will perish, and only the descendants of Keturah (last wife of Abraham) whom Abraham had sent away from the land of Israel (Genesis 25,6) will survive and serve Israel. What is their survival due to? Abraham had removed them to a distant place, built them a city surrounded by a high iron wall and provided for them so that they would not have to hire themselves out until the time of the Messiah, so that they would not have to perish with all the other nations.

They say about the kingdom of Sheba (Kings I 10,1) that they had heard that Solomon was the Messiah, i.e. *shema ozen yishma-uli*, whereupon they journeyed to Jerusalem only to find that they had been misinformed.

To prevent strangers from claiming to be *beney Keturah*, descendants of Keturah at the time of the Messiah and to deceive the Israelites as the Gibeonites had done (Joshua chapter 9), David says that there is no fear of this, since they are under no compulsion to come. They would not come prematurely, seeing they had been told to await the Messiah, and would only come when they heard that the Messiah was indeed at hand. The *rosh goyim* David has in mind to become, is that he wants NOW to become the King of the *beney Keturah* when he will destroy the other gentile nations, Amalek amongst them.

מו בְּנֵי-נֵכָר יִבֹּלוּ וְיַחְרְגוּ מִמִּסְגְּרוֹתֵיהֶם׃
מז חַי-יְהוָה וּבָרוּךְ צוּרִי וְיָרוּם אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעִי׃
מח הָאֵל הַנּוֹתֵן נְקָמוֹת לִי וַיַּדְבֵּר עַמִּים תַּחְתָּי׃
מט מְפַלְטִי מֵאֹיְבָי אַף מִן-קָמַי תְּרוֹמְמֵנִי מֵאִישׁ חָמָס
תַּצִּילֵנִי׃
נ עַל-כֵּן אוֹדְךָ בַגּוֹיִם יְהוָה וּלְשִׁמְךָ אֲזַמֵּרָה׃

An unknown nation *am lo yadati – ya-avduni* will serve me, become my subjects. That nation entertains no jealousy. They had not been commanded to come forward until they heard about ME. The timing of their arrival had never been subject to a specific date.

46. The *beney nechar* alien people, i.e. the gentiles, will first fade away. After that the *am lo yadati*, the nation I had not known will make its appearance, and come out of its hiding place where Abraham had hidden them. There is no chance of their being mistaken for someone else, as they will make their appearance only after all the other nations have been wiped out.

47. I do not ask that the redemption shall come now because I entertain doubts about it materializing in the future, or because I have doubts about my own role in it in the future, for *chay hashem* G'd is alive and *baruch tzuri* my Rock is well.

My only motive is *veyarum elokey yish-i* to raise my Lord and Saviour to the public stature that befits Him. Better that redemption should come now, and the *Shechinah* should NEVER have to exile itself, and suffer degradation, than that it should emerge from exile at a future time.

48. If You G'd were to say to me that Israel has no merit entitling it to accelerated redemption, seeing that *sinat chinam*, unprovoked mutual hatred is rife among them, i.e. they want to kill me etc., I reply that this is only because they have not seen me at my best. When You G'd demonstrate that You avenge Yourself of Your enemies, i.e. *vayadber amim tachtoy* by subduing the gentile nations under me.

49. and I will escape my enemies, i.e. *mefalti me-oyvay*, and *terome-meni* You will elevate me and deliver me *me-ish chamass* from violent people, all will be rectified, i.e. there will no longer be any *sin-at chinam*, groundless hatred.

50. By doing so You will hasten the time for final redemption, and I will be able to give thanks to You Lord amongst the gentile nations and sing to Your name. As long as You do not elevate me, – they will only be saying jeeringly "where is your G'd"?

He accords great victories to His king, keeps faith with His anointed, with David and his offspring forever.

19 [1]*For the leader. A psalm of David.*

51. Since You will make my son Solomon's kingdom more glorious anyway, and he will be described as occupying the "throne of G'd" (Chronicles II 1,23), instead of allowing his grandeur to fade, – until You will do kindness with G'd's redeemer, i.e. David in Messianic times, why not elevate me NOW, and increase my kingdom steadily during the lifetime of my son Solomon without any relapses?! I wish to be able to thank You for this kind of historic development!

Psalm 19

1. This Psalm poses many questions, seeing that the first half seems conceptually unrelated to the second half.

Before addressing ourselves to all the difficulties, we must recall what our sages said in Chagigah 12. "There are 7 *reki-im* (heavens). They are called (in ascending order) Vilon, rakiyah, shechakim, zevul, ma-on, machon, and arvot. Vilon performs no specific function except that it enters in the morning and exits in the evening, and so it continues endlessly. Rakiyah is the domain of the stars, the moon and the sun. Shechakim is the domain in which the angels grind the mannah for the righteous in the future. Zevul contains Jerusalem and the sanctuary (i.e. the celestial ones) where the archangel Michael offers the souls of the righteous on the altar. Ma-on is the domain which contains various groups of ministering angels, – who proclaim the grandeur of G'd in daily song. Machon is the domain in which snow and smoke, vapour, are kept. Arvot is the domain containing the throne of G'd.

There are people who explain the expression *7 reki-yim* as referring to the seven planets and their orbits. Seeing that according to that view the second *rakiah* would contain only a single planet, such people are in direct conflict with the teachings of our sages that *raki-yah* is the domain which contains sun, moon, the stars and the various constellations, called *mazzalot.*

According to the view that 7 *reki-yim* merely refers to the 7 basic planets, this would also contradict our sages who say that *vilon* does not have a specific function. In similar manner, that view would

נא מַגְדִּיל יְשׁוּעוֹת מַלְכּוֹ וְעֹשֶׂה חֶסֶד לִמְשִׁיחוֹ לְדָוִד
וּלְזַרְעוֹ עַד-עוֹלָם׃

יט

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד׃

contradict every one of the statements we have quoted from Chagigah 12.

We accept therefore, that the sages of the Talmud knew what they were talking about when they defined the 7 domains as *rekiyim* rather than as *galgalim*, i.e. planets or galaxies. Our sages perceived ALL the planets as belonging to the second domain, the one they labelled *rakiyah*, specifically.

The sages are unanimous in viewing all domains starting from *shechakim* as that of angels, i.e. inhabited by purely spiritual, celestial beings. Each "higher" domain distinguishes itself from the previous one by its more intensely spiritual nature, until the "highest" domain which is "above" the world of angels, and contains the souls of the righteous.

To come to the meaning of this hymn, we need to understand that at the time of *ma-aseh bereshit*, the creative period of the world, three worlds were in fact created. (Bereshit Rabbah 1,3) They are: the world of angels, (either on the second or the 5th day, depending on the interpretation of Genesis 1,20), the world of galaxies, the planets including sun and moon, and other inert bodies. Lastly, there was earth in its present form, i.e. populated by creatures possessed of mortal bodies.

Our sages further taught us (Bereshit Rabbah 1,14) that G'd made the "lower" world His principal achievement, since it contains the souls of man whose origin is high up in the celestial regions immediately below the throne of G'd. This is in line with Tanchumah Nasso 16, that ever since the beginning of creation G'd desired a residence among the inhabitants of the "lower" world. This was to be accomplished by means of Israel OBSERVING G'd's will, as a result of which a sanctuary would be established on earth.

We have explained on Genesis 28,12 when Jacob had the dream in which angels ascend and descend the ladder respectively, that the Torah describes angels as ascending first, since the principal residence of the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, is in our world. Only afterwards are these angels described as "descending". Since the angels are carriers of the *merkavah*, G'd's entourage, they ascend from their "home".

[2]*The heavens declare the glory of God, the sky proclaims His handiwork.*
[3]*Day to day makes utterance, night to night speaks out.*

Ascending is equivalent to leaving one's house then. We have also explained Deuteronomy 10,14, "Here, – to the Lord belong the heaven and the heaven of the heavens, the earth and all that is therein", to mean that by rights either the word "earth" or the word "heaven of heavens" should have been listed first in that sentence, so as to establish a proper order of priorities.

The fact that the Torah commences with the term "heaven", is to tell us that there is NO absolute value relationship between earth and heaven. If man acts as he should act, "earth" is more important than the "heaven of heavens" even, is being listed at the top of an ascending order. The words ***hen lashem elokecha*** then means "if You relate PROPERLY to the Lord Your G'd etc. by being righteous, He makes His residence on earth, and earth therefore is of PRIMARY importance in all of the 3 worlds. It is then more important even than the domain of angels. The function of both ***shamayim*** heaven, and ***shemey hashamayim*** the heaven of heavens, then is simply to provide the conduit for G'd's blessing to reach earth.

2. David wants to reply to those who are puzzled that the 2 worlds which are NOT the most important ones, achieve their perfection i.e. ***hashamayim mesaprim*** the angels tell of G'd's glory etc., and even the ***rakiyah*** the galaxies, inert matter, tells of His accomplishments i.e. ***yom leyom*** and ***laylah lelaylah***, daily and nightly, whereas OUR world, the most important one, does not seem to achieve its purpose, its perfection with any degree of certainty.

The author relates that the Midrash hagadol describes Abraham as having realized that there must be a Power which controls the sun and the moon i.e. the world of galaxies, when he saw that no single planet had control over any other planet, and that all of them orbited at pre-arranged times and locations. (compare Maimonides chapter 1 hilchot avodah zarah)

At any rate, – in both of those worlds G'd's supremacy is constantly visible. If our world is so much MORE important, should not G'd's Presence be visible even more clearly?

Why, in our world, are we allowed to frustrate G'd's will, though our world is supposed to matter most to Him?

Commencing with verse 8, after having completed his description of how nature, i.e. the world of galaxies has led man to the recognition that there is a Creator, – David will answer the question how and why G'd allowed man to come so close to perdition.

ג הַשָּׁמַיִם מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד-אֵל וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו מַגִּיד
הָרָקִיעַ:
ג יוֹם לְיוֹם יַבִּיעַ אֹמֶר וְלַיְלָה לְלַיְלָה יְחַוֶּה דָּעַת:

3. In order that someone should not draw the conclusion that our world is subject only to the laws of nature, i.e. that summer and winter, heat and cold etc. are purely natural phenomena, not determined by G'd, David says *yom layom yabia omer* one day tells the next day – of G'd's achievements.

Bereshit Rabbah relates that when the universe was being created, one day i.e. the first day told the subsequent day what had been created on the previous day. It sounds strange that the day should be possessed of insight and intelligence. Besides, how could one day, for instance, speak to day number 2 which had not yet been created? Besides, what need was there for such conversation?

However, we have explained on that Midrash that the 10 *ma-amarot*, directives with which G'd created the universe (Avot 5,1) were each in itself an act of creation, that *u-veruach piv kol tzeva-am* with the "breath of His mouth", He created all their hosts. (Psalms 33,6) Also we read in Isaiah 55,11 "my WORD which emanates from My mouth, will not return empty, i.e. without having accomplished My will": This means that the word ITSELF accomplishes His will. (the process is simultaneous).

At the same time we know that the 10 directives with which the universe was created, represent 10 celestial forces, and that G'd began by employing these forces, using lesser forces on a descending scale. The word of G'd which had created the first day was SUPERIOR in force to the directive used to create the second day.

We need therefore to understand as follows. Since each preceding day had been created by employing a relatively superior force (and directive), the subsequent days were in a position to automatically benefit from the emanations of the superior force which had brought the previous day into existence.

Hence, the first day was able to *yabia omer* not just *omer*, i.e. utter, but convey the impact of the superior force which had called it into being. The same applies throughout the 7 days of *ma-asseh bereshit*, the week (cycle) of creation. In this manner, the existence and quality of each successive day was partially determined by the previous day's experience.

Our sages have expressed this beautifully, when they said that G'd

> [4]*There is no utterance, there are no words, whose sound goes unheard.*
> [5]*Their voice carries throughout the earth, their words to the end of the world. He placed in them a tent for the sun,*

equipped each one of the days of creation with the ability to relate its quality or essence to the day following. This was so because the holiness G'd had infused in each creative directive did not evaporate until the day following, and until its further developments had become manifest.

Based on that statement of our sages, we can understand our Psalm. David cautions people not to think that G'd is not a part of everything that has been created on earth, and that earth follows an independent path determined by forces preceding the existence of G'd; or that though G'd had created earth, everything that happens since that time is predetermined through zodiac constellations.

Rather, everything has been created in consonance with precise instructions by G'd. This is why David does not say *yom leyom omer*, day speaks to day, but *yom leyom yabia omer*, day communicates the essence of G'd's *ma-amar* directive.

The directive issued by G'd on every one of the 7 days, leaves its permanent imprint on the nature of the day which it created. All the potential with which each day had been equipped on the day it came into being, continues to be active. If day number one laid the groundwork for day number two, these same forces continue actively at work also now.

By means of day number one communicating to day number two certain natural laws, the fabric of the whole creative process is woven together step by step. The same applies to activities which by their nature are nocturnal, i.e. developments which take place at night.

Hence the Psalmist says *velaylah le-layla yechaveh da-at*, that night communicates knowledge to another night. Starting with the spirit of the first night of the first day, each successive night shares its cumulative knowledge with the subsequent night.

Just as there is continuity in the creative process, – so there is continuity in the relationship of the Creator with all of His creations.

Since night is not a period of primary creative activity, the Psalmist when referring to the communications between one night and another, is content to describe the level of such communication as merely *da-at*, factual knowledge, whereas the communications

ד אֵין אֹמֶר וְאֵין דְּבָרִים בְּלִי נִשְׁמָע קוֹלָם:
ה בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ יָצָא קַוָּם וּבִקְצֵה תֵבֵל מִלֵּיהֶם לַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
שָׂם אֹהֶל בָּהֶם:

between day and day include G'd's *ma-amar* i.e. *omer*, the directive by which it came into existence.

4. Should a person find it difficult to understand how there could have been a "spoken" directive, i.e. *omer*, since such a term implies that there is someone who can actually hear the spoken directive, the Psalmist says that it is true that there was as yet no creature to hear such directive, but this does not preclude the existence of such a directive.

5. Proof of Divine supervision of the earth and what goes on in our world, lies in the fact that though the orbit of the sun is some 365 days and that of the moon 29 days and some hours, each one has been made to appear daily on every part of earth.

It is clear that the sun has been allocated pre-eminence by day, whereas the moon is pre-eminent by night. This can only be due to G'd's supervision, which brings them out at their respective and appropriate time, as we read in Isaiah 40,26. The prophet describes "lift up your eyes heavenwards and behold! Who has created these things and brings them out according to their host by their proper number, who calls each ones by their names etc.?" Similarly, we read in Habakkuk 3,11, "the sun and the moon stood still in their *zevul* (orbit); praise the Lord etc., at the light of Your arrows they went, and at the shining of Your glittering spear".

Our sages interpret that all the celestial bodies possess independent intelligence, (Maimonides hilchot yesodey hatorah 3,9), are aware of their Creator; each one according to its relative eminence, praises its Creator. They also recognize the angels who are superior to them. Their knowledge is superior to man, but inferior to that of angels.

The *ketzeh tevel*, is the area on earth which is distant from Jerusalem, the area where the gentiles dwell, whose eyes have not been enlightened by G'd's Torah.

Therefore, their words, i.e. the words of the inhabitants of the "end of the earth", their words about the sun etc. are that it would emerge and shed its light on earth. They believe that G'd put a special tent above sun, moon and stars.

All this is the concept of the nations of the world, who believe that G'd has set up a "super" galaxy beyond all the other planets which

6who is like a groom coming forth from the chamber, like a hero, eager to run his course.
7His rising-place is at one end of heaven, and his circuit reaches the other; nothing escapes his heat.
8The teaching of the LORD is perfect, renewing life; the decrees of the LORD are enduring, making the simple wise;

the sun retreats to every day and which is responsible for the 24 hour cycle of day and night and our observing the sun proceed in an east-west direction.

This "super" *galgal*, galaxy, determines when the sun reveals itself daily, and when night falls. So far *mileyhem*, the words of the scientists of the earth who reside far from the centre of true knowledge, i.e. Jerusalem, and who therefore subscribe to the belief that the sun is a captive of that "super" galaxy.

6. The Psalmist states that the facts are quite different. The sun appears daily of its own free will, just as a bridegroom from under his wedding canopy. The sun describes its orbit joyfully, like a hero who commences his run. This is what Ecclesiastes 1,5, is all about, where Solomon says "the sun shines, and it yearns for the place it shines from". In the "higher" regions, the sun's illumination is not like on earth. There it is a great light, so great in fact, that the creatures of that domain cannot tolerate its brilliance, so that G'd has to put a sheath over it while it is in those domains. (Kohelet Rabbah 1,2 on that verse) Another version is that G'd "submerges it in a pool of water to diminish its strength and heat". At any rate, ONLY in the celestial regions is the sun allowed to operate at its full potential. THERE, it is happy. When it comes out on earth, it leaves behind its sheath, just like a bridegroom who leaves the glory of the wedding canopy, having the urge to do so.

Had the sun been captive in the "super" galaxy, as the scientists of the gentiles thought, it would remain constant, stationary, and only that galaxy would control its APPARENT motion, allowing it to be visible during part of the 24 hour cycle only.

As it is, like a bridegroom who hastens back to his bridal canopy, so the sun hastens to run its course, dispense its weakened light, only to return to its source like all travellers who are anxious to return to their home, the source of their joy and contentment.

7. Proof that the sun is not a "natural" phenomenon, but one which is subject to G'd's direct supervision and guidance, is that it commences its run at one end of the horizon and its circuit continues

ו וְהוּא כְּחָתָן יֹצֵא מֵחֻפָּתוֹ יָשִׂישׂ כְּגִבּוֹר לָרוּץ אֹרַח:
ז מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם מוֹצָאוֹ וּתְקוּפָתוֹ עַל-קִצוֹתָם וְאֵין
נִסְתָּר מֵחַמָּתוֹ:
ח תּוֹרַת יְהוָה תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נָפֶשׁ עֵדוּת יְהוָה נֶאֱמָנָה
מַחְכִּימַת פֶּתִי:

to the end of the horizon. Its light fills all 4 corners of the globe. Had its light been merely natural, then at the point of its emergence, its light and warmth would have been far stronger than at the extreme end of its path. However, we observe *eyn nisstar mechamato*, nothing is hidden from its heat, i.e. that all parts of the globe enjoy its heat in equal measure. This proves that the sun does not operate merely due to the dictates of natural law.

8. David now comes back to the question we had raised earlier, why the inhabitants of the other two domains i.e. the domain of angels and the domain of the galaxies are certain of achieving their respective purposes, whereas man in the "lower" world, which has been described as the most important one, has no such assurance, is in fact in danger of not realizing his potential.

This is due to the fact that man's soul, which originated immediately below the throne of G'd in the highest of the celestial domains, has become "murky" due to its fusion in a human body, the source of unworthy thoughts, sinful instincts etc. (Zohar 3,29.) Not only that, through the exposure to sin, defilement etc. G'd's desire to have His principal residence on earth may be thwarted.

David answers this by saying that in order to prevent such potentially catastrophic results, G'd gave Israel a Torah (instruction) which represents perfection. If someone observes Torah totally, he will achieve his perfection. By the very nature of the Divine origin of Torah, Torah is able to act as *meshivat nefesh* to restore the soul to its root in heaven, and to close the gap that man's sins have created between him and his Creator. (Isaiah 59,2)

Our sages in Sukkah 52, tell us that Torah nullifies (cancels out) the seductive power of the *yetzer hara*, evil urge. If it had been stone like, it would melt, if it had been tough as iron, it would explode.

Should someone ask for proof of this, the Psalmist adds *eydut hashem*, the testimony that this is indeed so is that *mach-kimat pe-ti*, that Torah makes the simpleton become wise. Our sages have said that study of Torah sharpens the brain even of a simpleton. We read in Deut. 6,7, "you will teach them repeatedly" i.e. the words of Torah.

> [9]*The precepts of the LORD are just, rejoicing the heart; the instruction of the LORD is lucid, making the eyes light up.*
> [10]*The fear of the LORD is pure, abiding forever; the judgments of the LORD are true, righteous altogether,*

The meaning of the word ***veshinantam*** is derived from ***shinun***, sharpness. Hence the meaning of the verse "you will sharpen your sons", i.e. Torah will be like sharp arrows, i.e. it will sharpen a person's brain".

All this is achieved because Torah attaches itself to man's soul, seeing that both originate from the same source, are of the same mettle.

Compare Job 32,8 ***nishmat shaddai tevinem***, "the soul, being of Divine origin, grants them understanding".

Or, – based on Jeremiah 23,29 the proof lies in the fact that we observe many people who are totally incompetent in worldly matters, but who excel in the most difficult aspects of Torah study. This proves that Torah contains the ingredient that transforms the simpleton into a wise man.

9. To the argument that Torah confers such advantages ONLY on those who embrace Torah wholeheartedly, – hardly a majority of the Jewish people, – David says that the remainder of the Jewish people can make certain that they too achieve their G'd given task by merely OBSERVING Torah laws.

When Israel observes ***pikudey Hashem***, G'd's ordinances, ***yesharim***, out of pure motives, – then ***mesamchey lev***, they will gladden the heart. When that occurs, the ***yetzer hara*** is no longer something to be feared. The two parts of man most sensitive to the wiles of the evil urge, are first and foremost the eyes and the heart. (Yerushalmi Berachot 1, halachah 5)

It is the HEART which rejoices when G'd's precepts are fulfilled ***lishmah***, without ulterior motive. The eye too will recuperate from the disease of the ***yetzer hara***, since G'd's ***mitzvot*** i.e. specifically the commandment of wearing ***tzitzit***, fringes act as antidote to the temptations the eye is subject to. (Numbers 15,39.) ***barah– me-irat eynayim***. Looking at the ***tzitzit*** is a cure for the visually induced temptation.

The Talmud in Menachot 44, relates that a certain man had been told about a very alluring harlot, overseas, who charged 400 dinars for her favours. The man sent the harlot the 400 dinars, made an appointment, and travelled to the place of her abode. He was

ט פִּקּוּדֵי יְהוָה יְשָׁרִים מְשַׂמְּחֵי-לֵב מִצְוַת יְהוָה בָּרָה
מְאִירַת עֵינָיִם:
י יִרְאַת יְהוָה טְהוֹרָה עוֹמֶדֶת לָעַד מִשְׁפְּטֵי-יְהוָה אֱמֶת
צָדְקוּ יַחְדָּו:

tremendously impressed with the affluence and pomp which surrounded that harlot. When he undressed and prepared to go to bed with the harlot, he looked at the 4 *tzitzit* of his garment, and they appeared to him like 4 witnesses who would testify against him before G'd for having slept with that whore. He left the money, and was about to take his leave, when the harlot wanted to know what possible blemish he had found on her person which could have turned him off. He told the harlot that the fault was in no way hers, but that the Jewish people observed a commandment which acted as a warning not to anger their G'd.

The story deserves our attention. Why did the *tzitzit* have such a startling effect on that particular person, whereas the average Jew does NOT experience a feeling that his *tzitzit* are witnesses who will testify against him?

The sages of the Talmud may have wanted to convey the following. The text in the story stresses "a story of a person who was VERY CAREFUL with his *tzitzit* observance. In other words, the person in question had made THAT *mitzvah* the focal point of his general *mitzvah* observance.

He had become so accustomed to let the *tzitzit* remind him of all the other *mitzvot* (compare Numbers 15, 39–40) until the sanctity of all the *mitzvot* and this *mitzvah* in particular had become an acquired trait for him. He USUALLY thought about the *tzitzit* as witnesses who would eventually testify ON HIS BEHALF to his general *mitzvah* performance. This is something ordinary people are not able to do, since their *mitzvah* observance is not the result of focussing on the *mitzvah* of *tzitzit*.

What David has in mind when he says *mitzvat hashem barah me-irat eynayim* is that when the commandment of G'd is *barah*, brilliant, pure like crystal, to a person, not only he but also the *mitzvah* i.e. the *tzitzit* acquire the brilliance of sanctity. (like the statement in Avot 4,1, that each *mitzvah* creates a positive force, an angel)

The *tzitziyot* though mere fringes – are transformed through the person who uses them to inspire him with *mitzvah* performance, into a spiritual force. In turn this acts as *me-irat eynayim*, enlightens such

[11]*more desirable than gold, than much fine gold; sweeter than honey, than drippings of the comb.*

a person's eyes, and neutralizes whatever *chet*, sin the *yetzer hara*, evil urge had tried to inspire through misuse of one's eyes.

10. If a person does NOT EVEN have the performance of a single positive commandment to his credit, as long as he is G'd fearing, and not guilty of transgressions of Torah laws, i.e. his fear of G'd is not fear of punishment but *yirat hashem tehorah*, is pure reverence for G'd, he still can ultimately fulfill himself.

What is meant by this *yirat hashem* is that a person is afraid, concerned lest he commit a sin, not that he is afraid of being punished for sins he knows he already committed.

A prime example of such *yirat hashem* is our patriarch Jacob, who was afraid that some sin he had committed unwittingly might jeopardize G'd's assurances to him. (Berachot 4)

The Torah herself defines *yirah* as the primary request G'd makes of us. (Deut. 10,12). The merit of such *yirah*, reverence *omedet la-ad*, endures forever, since it is itself a *mitzvah*. (though not an activity).

The Talmud in Megillah 25, agrees that for ordinary people – as opposed to Moses –, possessing such *yirah* is a MAJOR accomplishment. Should a person lack EVEN that accomplishment, but at least preoccupy himself, with *mishpetey hashem*, i.e. comport himself in accordance with those laws of the Torah which our own intelligence would have dictated to us had G'd not already formulated them, he still acquires considerable merit, since G'd's social statutes are an expression of *emet*, truth, as will be explained.

A person might have thought that the SANCTITY of Torah laws does NOT apply in matters dealing with *nezikin*, i.e. legislation governing compensation for damage caused by one human being to another, or to another's property. He might have thought that such matters are mundane, seeing our common sense tell us the need for such legislation.

After all, unless there was legislation regulating the relationship between man and his fellow man, there would be no civilization, and we would devour each other alive.

Seeing then that this is the PURPOSE of the legislation, one could reason that the source for such legislation (Torah i.e. divine, or man made) is irrelevant. To counter such a philosophy, the Psalmist says *mishpetey hashem emet tzadku yachdav*, only G'd's social laws represent truth, only they provide a framework for total righteousness, *yachdav tzedaka*.

יא הַנֶּחֱמָדִים מִזָּהָב וּמִפָּז רָב וּמְתוּקִים מִדְּבַשׁ וְנֹפֶת צוּפִים׃

No one is judged on earth without having previously been judged by a heavenly tribunal, at least once a year on Rosh Hashanah, New Year's day. (Rosh Hashanah 16)

That is the day man's livelihood is determined for the next 12 months. It follows that, supposing Reuben were obligated according to both a Jewish tribunal and the heavenly tribunal, to pay Shimon 100 dollars, whereas according to gentile jurisprudence he would not be adjudged guilty of such payment, at the time Shimon's annual income is determined in heaven, allowance would have to be made for the fact that Shimon took his case to a gentile court of law. He would need to be compensated for the amount that Reuben should have paid him from some other source. At the same time, Reuben would have to be deprived of $100 in some other way through heavenly intervention, in order to receive precisely what had been adjudged for him on Rosh Hashanah.

By not going to a Jewish court, Reuben had upset the harmony which had prevailed in heaven on Rosh Hashanah after allocation of people's incomes for the year. "Truth" is therefore available only in a properly constituted Jewish court where it reflects Divine justice. The reason David says *mishpetey* (plural) judgements of G'd, is that there is the one arrived at in the celestial court as well as the judgement arrived at in the terrestrial court.

11. What we have said in favour of Divinely legislated social justice, has still another facet. Man might argue that if the rules of social justice instead of being imposed from above, would be allowed to become the result of a consensus of human society, such legislation would be more widely accepted.

Brotherliness amongst man might be furthered by a social justice system (man made) which made for less inequality in material wealth between one person and another.

Man might also legislate arbitration or mediation, rather than the application of strict rules of right and wrong.

For all these reasons, a Jew might argue, that by choosing a gentile court when facing litigation he was actually acting within the wider framework of Torah *hashkafah*, outlook.

The Psalmist replies that such considerations are present only within those litigants who only have their own personal advantage at heart, who are not interested in true justice. They turn to a gentile court only because they feel that such a court would favour their

12 *Your servant pays them heed; in obeying them there is much reward.*
13 *Who can be aware of errors? Clear me of unperceived guilt,*
14 *and from willful sins keep Your servant; let them not dominate me; then shall I be blameless and clear of grave offense.*

case. Those who truly cherish G'd's law and justice more than *zahav* and *paz rav*, large quantities of gold etc. would demonstrate their regard for G'd's justice by risking the court making a decision which could turn out to be very expensive for them financially.

Such a person, says David, will be amply recompensed in the hereafter for any supposed losses sustained in this life by submitting to the decision of Jewish judges though they had had an alternative. This is what the Talmud Baba Kama 30, teaches, when it says "the way to demonstrate true piety is in one's dealings when involved in litigation regarding financial matters".

12. The statement we have just quoted, i.e. who is truly pious, raises the question that if observance of fine points of the law are the criteria, surely such fine points and their observance would constitute the way to assess someone's piety in any area of Torah law. Besides, the very term "piety" is normally understood to describe one's relationship vis a vis G'd, not to one's relationship vis a vis one's fellow man. Meticulous fairness in dealing with one's fellow man makes one a *tzaddik*, a righteous person but not a *chassid*, a pious person.

The truth is that a person who observes *mishpatim*, social laws meticulously, is careful not to cause his fellow man even minor damage or disadvantage, does so in order to maintain a degree of innocence and PURITY vis a vis G'd. Hence the term *chassid*, a pious individual, is perfectly in order. It is possible therefore to demonstrate piety in the manner in which one relates to ANY PART of Torah legislation.

In fact, this is no more than logical. If a person can be meticulous in Torah observance in areas in which he is subject to great temptation (the acquisition of personal wealth), then it is to be assumed that his meticulous observance of Torah laws in areas in which he is exposed to the *yetzer hara* only peripherally, can be assumed. He would therefore be a true *chassid*. This is why the Talmud uses man's behaviour in money matters as a yardstick when judging piety.

יג גַּם עַבְדְּךָ נִזְהָר בָּהֶם בְּשָׁמְרָם עֵקֶב רָב:
יד שְׁגִיאוֹת מִי-יָבִין מִנִּסְתָּרוֹת נַקֵּנִי:
טו גַּם מִזֵּדִים חַשׂךְ עַבְדֶּךָ אַל-יִמְשְׁלוּ-בִי אָז אֵיתָם
וְנִקֵּיתִי מִפֶּשַׁע רָב:

A person should not think that observance of *mishpatim*, social laws rates only minor reward, since it is a field of legislation dictated even by common sense.

David says, therefore, that even *avdecha*, Your servant, i.e. a person who is meticulous in his observance of those *mitzvot* which regulate man's behaviour vis a vis G'd, i.e. *nizhar bahem*, if they are meticulous in *mishpatim*, then *beshmram eykev rav*, such observance rates great reward.

13. There are 2 kinds of unintentional sins. One kind is the one in which one is aware of the law, but fails to appreciate that the situation facing one may involve violation of the law. A person may know, for instance, that eating a certain part of animal fat is prohibited. However, he fails to realize that the piece of fat in front of him is of the forbidden variety.

Another example of unintentional sin is unawareness that there is a law forbidding a certain activity that one is about to engage in. The latter example is called *shige-gat Talmud*, inadequate awareness of Torah precepts.

Concerning the first type of error, the Psalmist says *shegiyot mi yavin*, that the transgressor can hardly be held responsible, since the only reason he had not been careful was that he did not know there was something to be careful about.

On the other hand, *ministarot nakeyni*, David asks to be forgiven or to be protected against committing errors due to his inadequate learning of Torah law, or to things which he should have remembered but had forgotten. He acknowledges that he does bear some degree of responsibility for violating a law under such conditions. At any rate, he does not want it to be held against him as a deliberate offense.

14. Not only does David pray to be considered innocent concerning such of G'd's laws as he did not know, also concerning deliberate violations i.e. *zeydim*, does he ask *chassoch avdecha*, save your servant from the consequences of sins committed knowingly, i.e. from their "domino" effect. He refers to the *avayrah goreret avayrah* concept discussed in Avot 4,2.

David elaborates by saying that he does not want to put the onus

15*May the words of my mouth and the prayer of my heart be acceptable to You, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.*

20 1*For the leader. A psalm of David.*
2*May the LORD answer you in time of trouble, the name of Jacob's God keep you safe.*

on G'd to prevent him from committing sins knowingly and thereby to cancel his freedom of action. He merely does not want that knowingly committed sins should predestine him to commit still more sins.

He asks to be like *eytam*, steadfast, i.e. like BEFORE he had committed any sin, without predisposition to commit any sins.

Concerning the inadvertent sins, committed because of inadequate study of Torah, *venikeyti mipesha rav!* protect me from ultimately committing sins deliberately, i.e. *pesha rav*=serious sin!

An example would be that through inadequate knowledge of Torah law, he would render false judgements. This in turn could trigger *pesha rav*, a major sin, such as refusing to reverse judgement once he had been made aware that he had erred originally. His refusal could be motivated by false pride, for instance.

By NOT reversing the faulty decision, he would then automatically become guilty of deliberate perversion of justice. (We have explained the concept in our commentary on Avot 4,2 and on several other occasions)

Because *mitzvot* or *averot*, once performed, are viewed as having created viable forces, either positive or negative, the Psalmist speaks in our verse about *zeydim* i.e. independent evil forces, not *zedonot*, merely sinful acts.

15. Up until now, says David, I have only asked concerning deeds performed or not performed as the case may be. Now, I ask also concerning my words and my thoughts.

Concerning his words, David says "may they be pleasing", *imrey phi*. Concerning his thoughts, he says *vehegyon libbi lefanecha Hashem*. He asks that when he prays, i.e. utters words, that these should reflect *hegyon libbi*, his true feelings, and not be mere rote, devoid of inner meaning.

Should however, he sometimes fail to pray with proper concentration, then he still asks *yihyu leratzon imrey phi*, let the

יד יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי-פִי וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה צוּרִי
וְגוֹאֲלִי:

כ א לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
ב יַעַנְךָ יְהוָה בְּיוֹם צָרָה יְשַׂגֶּבְךָ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:

words of my mouth themselves be pleasing, i.e. concentrate on MY words to G'd, not on the absence of the thoughts behind them.

On the other hand, let my thoughts *hegyon libbi lefanecha*, be fit for Your Presence, do not let me have unworthy thoughts.

Seeing that You G'd have two attributes, i.e. You are *tzuri* my rock, my saviour, who saves me from sin, and You are also *go-ali*, my redeemer who redeems me after I have sinned,I ask you to be first and foremost my *tzuri*. Do not let me sin!

Should I have sinned however, I ask You in Your capacity as *go-ali*, my redeemer. Better You should help me BEFORE I sin, than only in rehabilitating me.

Psalm 20

2. We have stated at the beginning of the book that in the interest of brevity we do not want to list all the questions that are dealt with, at the beginning of each Psalm, since we assume that the intelligent reader will realize these questions when he reads our commentary which incorporates the answers to those questions. We have therefore kept to this system also in this chapter.

According to our ancient commentators such as Yalkut Shimoni, item 680, the "day of trouble" referred to, is the difficult time preceding the arrival of the Messiah. Concerning the period of birthpangs of the Messiah, the Psalmist says "G'd will answer you on the day of trouble, or distress." Israel is told "IF ONLY it would call upon Hashem, He would answer them". Such a response could take one of several forms. 1) Israel calls, and G'd answers. 2) Before Israel verbalizes its plea, merely thinks about it, G'd already responds. Similarly, when G'd responds on normal occasions. (no distress call).

Some people pray only because their adversary has provoked them to such an extent that they appeal to G'd out of sheer desperation, and ask to be saved.

On the other hand, someone may pray that he should not only be saved, but that he should be granted victory over his enemy.

[3]*May He send you help from the sanctuary, and sustain you from Zion.*
[4]*May He receive the tokens of all your meal offerings, and approve your burnt offerings.* Selah.
[5]*May He grant you your desire, and fulfill your every plan.*

Thirdly, a person may pray that instead of being the persecuted, the tables should be turned and he should henceforth become the boss or ruler.

Amongst those who suffer from fear, there are also different categories. 1) A person asks G'd to save him as an act of kindness, (*chessed* presupposes completely unrequited love by G'd) but NOT because of pity. Such a person (the one who relies on pity) needs to be able to demonstrate SOME merit in order to have his prayer answered favorably. (Deuteronomy 13,18. compare Talmud Shabbat 151 on that verse).

For instance, he must at least have demonstrated pity for other creatures in order to warrant that G'd should have mercy on him. 2) A person may throw himself totally on G'd's mercy. 3) A person may ask that even the attribute of justice acknowledge that he is fit to be saved. The last in accordance with the view that the attribute of mercy can force the attribute of justice to concur with its wishes. (based on Psalms 7,12, that the word *el* refers to the attribute of mercy, and that the attribute of mercy is angry at the attribute of justice on an ongoing basis, i.e. *kol yom*, and forces the latter to concur)

4) The attribute of justice will agree that an individual is worth saving, without needing to be prompted. When deliverance does arrive, sometimes G'd sends it by means of an agent. However, when G'd finds that the person in question possesses sufficient merit, He personally performs the act of deliverance.

At the beginning of this Psalm, the author summarizes all the possible variations under a single heading, saying merely "in times of trouble, You will find G'd responsive". Israel is addressed in the singular, i.e. *ya-ancha* not *ya-anchem*, He will answer you (pl).

G'd does not mind that you have NOT called upon Him before you were in distress, and that you waited with communicating with Him till the day your troubles had arrived. However, because of this, He does not answer you before the trouble arrives. Also, because of this, ALL He does is SAVE you, i.e. *yesagevcha*, He elevates you (as if out of

ג יִשְׁלַח עֶזְרְךָ מִקֹּדֶשׁ וּמִצִּיּוֹן יִסְעָדֶךָּ׃
ד יִזְכֹּר כָּל-מִנְחֹתֶיךָ וְעוֹלָתְךָ יְדַשְּׁנֶה-סֶּלָה׃
ה יִתֶּן-לְךָ כִלְבָבֶךָ וְכָל-עֲצָתְךָ יְמַלֵּא׃

the mire) (compare Psalms 9,10,144,2). The meaning of the words "He answers you" implies that you have called upon Him first.

Also, the deliverance mentioned will not come from the attribute of justice, but from the attribute of mercy only, implying that you had NO merit.

This is why the Psalmist describes the source of your deliverance as *shem elokey ya-akov*. We know the term *el* from Megillah 18 interpreting the verse in Genesis 33,20 as meaning that "G'd called Jacob *el*". Here too the Psalmist tells us that G'd answers Israel on that day with His attribute of *el*, i.e. the name He had given Jacob. This is the attribute G'd employs when the recipient of His *chessed*, kindness is devoid of merits.

3. Even this deliverance does not come from G'd directly, but *yishlach ezrecha mikodesh*, He sends your help from a holy source, i.e. by means of an angel. This means that the only advantage you enjoy is that you are not left to the caprice of the *mazzal*, horoscopic influences.

David's prayer is that instead, *mitziyon Yis-adecha*, may He strengthen you from Zion, i.e. may His deliverance be of a higher order, from a source closer to YOUR essence o G'd.

4. This can be achieved *ki yiskor kol minchotecha*, when He will remember all your gift offerings in Zion, and your total offering, i.e. the binding of Isaac at Moriah which G'd had equated to Isaac having been burned and turned into ashes *deshen*. May He always bear this ash in mind! May this merit never cease!

5. May you benefit through this merit so that instead of employing only an agent to effect your deliverance, *yiten lecha*, He will give to you Himself. Not only that, but *ki-levavecha*, that G'd should help you when you turn to him only in your heart, i.e. before you have a chance to verbalize your prayers. The Psalmist says *levavecha* instead of *libcha*, since he wishes worldly benefits, which are subject to the *yetzer hara*'s influence i.e. the "other" heart, to be included. The fact that the *yetzer hara*'s, i.e. evil urge's desire is partially fulfilled when G'd grants material blessings, violates "true" *tzedek* righteousness.

Rather, *vechol atzatcha yimale*, means that G'd Himself will make up for any *chisaron*, inadequacy, in your *atzatcha*, your wisdom. Man

[6]May we shout for joy in your victory, arrayed by standards in the name of our God. May the LORD fulfill your every wish.
[7]Now I know that the LORD will give victory to His anointed, will answer him from His heavenly sanctuary with the mighty victories of His right arm.
[8]They [call] on chariots, they [call] on horses, but we call on the name of the LORD our God.

does not always realize how he should phrase his prayers etc. If both your hearts, i.e. urges are united, the Psalmist says, then G'd will *yemale*, complement whatever was missing in your *atzatcha*, your own counsel.

In Hoseah 6,3 we read "it shall come to us like rain, like the latter and the former rain on the earth." The Talmud, Taanit 4, uses this verse as an example of improper prayer by the people of Israel. G'd responded in verse 4, that He would turn that rain (which could prove to be harmful at times) into dew, which is always beneficial. The Psalmist here asks for similar action by G'd, should Israel's *eytzah*, counsel, wisdom, be expressed inappropriately.

Yalkut Shimoni on Isaiah 49,20, item 333, describes instances when even the prophets had not expressed their prayer appropriately.

David asks *ki-levavecha*, instead of *bi-levavecha*, to underline that since you still possess a *yetzer hara*, evil urge, He will make up any shortcomings in your ATTITUDE i.e. *ki* as if both your hearts were pure.

Since you are still at the level of *levavecha*, a dual heart, G'd at this point does not fulfill *kol mishalotecha*, all your requests since that would include the requests of your "other" heart, the evil urge.

6. To all this, Israel replies saying that though there will be two redemptions A) the return of G'd's *Shechinah* to earth from self imposed exile and B) the redemption of the Jewish people from exile, we see the exile of the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, as the pledge that we ourselves will be redeemed. We will jubilate *bi-yeshuatecha*, when Your *Shechinah* will emerge from its self imposed exile. We will consider our own salvation as of secondary importance. We will prove this by *u-veshem elokeynu nidgol*, by marching with the banner of the Lord our G'd. (not our OWN flag, or even that of the Messiah)

Hearing this, the *ruach hakodesh*, holy spirit responds that NOW G'd will fulfill ALL your requests, *kol mishalotecha*, not like in verse 5

ו נְרַנְּנָה בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ וּבְשֵׁם-אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִדְגֹּל יְמַלֵּא יְהוָה
כָּל-מִשְׁאֲלוֹתֶיךָ:
ז עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי הוֹשִׁיעַ יְהוָה מְשִׁיחוֹ יַעֲנֵהוּ מִשְּׁמֵי
קָדְשׁוֹ בִּגְבוּרוֹת יֵשַׁע יְמִינוֹ:
ח אֵלֶּה בָרֶכֶב וְאֵלֶּה בַסּוּסִים וַאֲנַחְנוּ בְּשֵׁם-יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵינוּ נַזְכִּיר:

when G'd promised to do only *ki-levavecha*, approximately according to what was in your heart.

Not only that, but it will be *Hashem*, i.e. the 4 lettered name of G'd who will do this, not just the *shem elokey yaakov* (of verse 2) a name employed only when G'd does favours to people without merit. (ibid verse 20)

Now, you will not only be saved – but will be granted superior status, that of the victor. The contrast between *atzatcha*, your counsel in the singular in verse 5, and *mishalotecha*, your requests (plural) in this verse, indicates that G'd will grant manifold desires, even convert those that have not been formulated wisely.

7, Since all of this MIGHT only be the attitude of the attribute of mercy, *midat harachamim*, while the *midat hadin* attribute of justice may not agree, David now says, that, originally, when we had heard *ya-ancha*, He answers you (singular), we might have thought that G'd answers Israel ONLY when the latter are united as one. *Attah*, now however, we have heard G'd respond to Israel's diverse voices, i.e. that they said *ne-ranenah* WE will jubilate".

David says therefore that the term *ya-ancha* in verse 2 referred only to *meshicho*, i.e. himself. Concerning the future however, David says, I am asking for more. *Ya-anehu mishmey kodsho, bigvurot yesha.* He will respond to you from the areas to which the *Shechinah* had withdrawn (Shemot Rabbah 2,2) after the temple had been destroyed, and at that point the *midat harachamim,* attribute of mercy, will compel the *midat hadin* attribute of justice to add its approval in order for the redemption to be equivalent to *gevurot yesha*, all the mighty acts of salvation at G'd's command. *Yemin*, the right, is the name of *chessed* which keeps the attribute of justice in check daily, and restrains G'd's anger *za-am*, as we explained on Psalms 7,12.

8. To this, Israel responds that it is not satisfied even with this. Based on the merit of the many who *beshem Hashem elokeynu*

9*They collapse and lie fallen, but we rally and gather strength.*
10*O LORD, grant victory! May the King answer us when we call.*

21 1*For the leader. A psalm of David.*
2*O LORD, the king rejoices in Your strength; how greatly he exults in Your victory!*
3*You have granted him the desire of his heart, have not denied the request of his lips.* Selah.
4*You have proffered him blessings of good things, have set upon his head a crown of fine gold.*

nazkir, who mention the name of our Lord, Israel wants the *midat hadin* to respond OF ITS OWN accord, even though Israel itself has appealed only to the attribute of mercy, not having claimed any other entitlement.

At the time when we are loyal to G'd, i.e. at the time when we proclaim His name, when the gentiles rise up against us, *barechev uvasussim*, with horses and chariots, at that time, only *hashem hoshiah*, G'd must help us. However, we demand to be able to give thanks to *hashem elokeynu*, for the manifestation of the *midat hadin* on our behalf of its own volition.

Compare Baba Batra 75, that the *tzadikim* themselves bear the name of "G'd".

9. As soon as we call *shem hashem elokeynu*, i.e. as *tzaddikim* we need ONLY to call upon the *midat hadin*, and as a result *hamelech ya-aneynu*, the king, i.e. the attribute of justice, will respond, they will fall on their knees and collapse, whereas we ourselves *kamnu*, we shall rise, *vanitodad* and remain in an elevated position.

10. What we are asking for now once more, concerning the future, is, that also the *midat hadin*, i.e. *hamelech ya-aneynu* should respond to us when we call on the *midat harachamim*, i.e. *hashem hoshiah*. The attribute *melech*, king, is specifically reserved for G'd in his capacity as judge, as we know from our liturgy during the 10 days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Psalm 21

1. The Talmud Sukkah 52, understands this Psalm as referring to the Messiah (Mashiach ben Yosef). Others, including Rashi,

ח הֵמָּה כָרְעוּ וְנָפָלוּ וַאֲנַחְנוּ קַמְנוּ וַנִּתְעוֹדָד:
ט יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעָה הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְיוֹם-קָרְאֵנוּ:

כא א לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
ב יְהוָה בְּעָזְּךָ יִשְׂמַח-מֶלֶךְ וּבִישׁוּעָתְךָ מַה יָּגֵיל מְאֹד:
ג תַּאֲוַת לִבּוֹ נָתַתָּה לוֹ וַאֲרֶשֶׁת שְׂפָתָיו בַּל-מָנַעְתָּ סֶלָה:
ד כִּי תְקַדְּמֶנּוּ בִּרְכוֹת טוֹב תָּשִׁית לְרֹאשׁוֹ עֲטֶרֶת פָּז:

understand it as referring to David personally. We believe that these views are not mutually exclusive, but that the Psalm can refer to both David and the Messiah.

Its object is to teach us about the advantages and virtues of the Messiah, i.e. David reincarnated over the present kingdom of David.

During David's reign, G'd's Presence manifested itself in David's successes in war against the surrounding nations, whereas in the future, at the time of the final redemption, the *Shechinah* itself will emerge from its self imposed exile and in the process will redeem Israel from exile. It is a fact that the king's ministers rejoice more at a time when their king is at the height of his power – since there is a beneficial fallout for those ministers – than at a time when the king himself frees himself from imprisonment. At such times, the king concentrates on freeing himself, and has no spare energy to hand out favours to those around him.

2. David refers to such a situation by saying "G'd, when You are at full strength, the king rejoices", but *bi'yeshuatcha* when You are preoccupied with Your own salvation, *mah y agel me-od*, how much more exultation will there be then! (i.e. NOT like the attitude of the ministers who rejoice less when their king emerges from prison).

3. At the present time, (David's kingdom) You G'd have granted 1) *ta-avat libbo*, the desire of his heart (i.e. BEFORE he verbalized it), 2) *areshet sefatav*, and have allowed him to proceed with his prayer. *bal manata selah*, You have not told him that since his prayer had been answered, he should not bother to pray. You have made him happy by taking the time to listen to his words.

4. An additional favour You have done is that You granted blessings *tekadmenah birchot tov*, i.e. already in this life, not deferring them to the hereafter. These are the *peyrot*, dividends of *mitzvah* performance discussed in Chullin 44, based on Psalms 128,2

[5]He asked You for life; You granted it; a long life, everlasting.
[6]Great is his glory through Your victory; You have endowed him with splendor and majesty.
[7]You have made him blessed forever, gladdened him with the joy of Your presence
[8]For the king trusts in the LORD; Through the faithfulness of the Most High he will not be shaken.
[9]Your hand is equal to all Your enemies; Your right hand overpowers Your foes.

vetov lach. (We have discussed this in our commentary on Psalms 19,14).

5. Another favour You have done for him is that whereas he asked for life from You in this world, You have granted him life NOT ONLY in this world, but also after the resurrection, i.e. *David melech yisrael chay vekayam* as interpreted in Rosh Hashanah 25, and the Zohar 1,192. These are the things *yismach melech* (verse 2) that king David enjoys while Your *Shechinah* is *betokef*, i.e. visibly at strength.

6. When I said *ki bi-yeshuatcha mah yagel me-od* (verse 2), I referred to the much greater glory the king would experience *bi-yeshuatan* when Your *Shechinah* will come out of its self imposed exile at the time of the final redemption. At that time, *hod ve-hadar*, You endow that king (i.e. the Messiah) with majesty and power *olam va-ed*, forever. The power of the *melech hamashiach*, the Messiah, will be immeasurably greater than that of David, at this time, when the *Shechinah* had not yet exiled itself.

The "reward" which had been described as a crown on the heads of the *tzaddikim*, the righteous in Berachot 17, will then be *alav*, i.e. will extend over his whole person, not just over his head.

The word *alav* is understood as in Genesis 37,23, "the striped coat which was *alav*, i.e. covered his body.

Hod vehadar are also the "garments" that G'd surrounded Himself with when He began to create something tangible. (Yalkut Shimoni on Isaiah 366, or Psalms 847, referring to Psalms 104,1)

7. Whereas during David's reign on earth so far, You have granted him an "advance" on the blessings that will accrue to him (verse 4), *teshittehu berachot la-ad*, in the future You will make him become blessings personified, forever.

In other words, the Messiah will be able to dispense blessings. These blessings will be for the physical world, not limited in duration.

ה חַיִּים שָׁאַל מִמְּךָ נָתַתָּה לוֹ אֹרֶךְ יָמִים עוֹלָם וָעֶד׃
ו גָּדוֹל כְּבוֹדוֹ בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ הוֹד וְהָדָר תְּשַׁוֶּה עָלָיו׃
ז כִּי תְשִׁיתֵהוּ בְרָכוֹת לָעַד תְּחַדֵּהוּ בְשִׂמְחָה אֶת-פָּנֶיךָ׃
ח כִּי-הַמֶּלֶךְ בּוֹטֵחַ בַּיהוָה וּבְחֶסֶד עֶלְיוֹן בַּל-פָּנֶיךָ׃
ט תִּמְצָא יָדְךָ לְכָל-אֹיְבֶיךָ יְמִינְךָ תִּמְצָא שֹׂנְאֶיךָ׃

Concerning the blessings in David's time, namely that G'd answered unspoken prayers (verse 3), but allowed those prayers to be uttered and listened to them, this is nothing compared to the Messianic era. At that time not only will G'd listen to your prayers, but at that time the glory of the king will not consist of the fact that He listens to your prayer without revealing his face, i.e. the relationship is aural not visual, but He will make Your face suffused with happiness and joy. In our present world, we serve G'd under the motto "serve the Lord in joy and trepidation", (combination of Psalms 2,11, and Psalms 100,2). This means that our joy must be tempered by fear lest our joy leads to light heartedness, irresponsibility. Not so in the future, when the Messiah will be able to serve the Lord in joy, without any restraints. On the contrary, *techadeyhu*, You will grant him gladness.

8. Because of his trust in G'd and the kindness of the Supreme being, this will ensure that his *simchah*, joy will not become a *michshol* stumbling block or obstacle for him.

9. Another advantage the Messiah will enjoy over the David of this present world is the manner in which G'd's, i.e. Israel's enemies are dealt with. In David's time, though G'd restrained the celestial forces representing Israel's enemies, David had to do the fighting against his enemies here on earth. In the time of the Messiah, G'd will do both, as described in Isaiah 23,21. This is what is meant by the repeated *timtza yadcha,...timtza sonecha*, i.e. Your hand G'd will do all this. The difference between *oyvecha*, your enemies and *sonecha* those who hate you, is that the former have destroyed the temple etc., i.e. they expressed their hatred of G'd and Israel in deed. They will be dealt with more harshly than the *sonecha*, who have harboured hatred only in their hearts. The Zohar 2,58 explains the verse in Zachariah 14,12 describing the punishment G'd will mete out to all those who *tzavu al yerushalayim*, who have marched on Jerusalem.

The prophet does not say "all those who WILL march against Jerusalem" (as we would have expected, seeing he describes events in the future). The prophet therefore includes all those who had been

10 *You set them ablaze like a furnace when You show*
Your presence. The LORD in anger destroys them; fire
consumes them.
11 *You wipe their offspring from the earth, their issue*
from among men.
12 *For they schemed against You; they laid plans, but*
could not succeed.
13 *For You make them turn back by Your bows aimed at*
their face.
14 *Be exalted, O LORD, through Your strength; we will*
sing and chant the praises of Your mighty deeds.

guilty of attacking Jerusalem already during or before his time. These will have to be resurrected to receive their punishment as described. At that time, and in accordance with Daniel 2,34 each Israelite will identify his one time foe, so that G'd can exact retribution. (compare Psalms 68,24)

10. Concerning the first group mentioned in verse 9, i.e. the *oyvim*, the Psalmist says "You will make them like a fiery oven". David emphasizes that G'd will subject these *oyvim* to the kind of fire that enables people to survive for a while. In order for THIS to occur, G'd personally (verse 9) has to apply this punishment, since any of His agents would simply burn them to ash in a flash, and their suffering would be shortlived.

All this will happen *le-eyt panecha*, at the time when the Messiah will be able to see Your face. (verse 7)

The *sonim* however, will be burned like straw, similar to Maleachi 3,19, whereas the righteous will experience healing sunshine. (Maleachi 3,20). We have explained Exodus 15,6–7 in a similar vein.

11. The offspring of these ACTIVE enemies of G'd, You will destroy quickly from the earth, i.e. without any prolonged suffering, since their hatred has been only in their hearts.

12. The reason G'd has been so severe with the *oyvim*, enemies, is not because of what they have done to Israel, but because of what they THOUGHT they had done to You, G'd. Based on Psalms 74,4 "Your oppressors raged in the interior of Your meeting place (temple), set up their own signs, instead of His signs".

The Talmud Gittin 56 relates that when Titus slashed the dividing curtain in the temple with his sword, blood spurted forth, and he believed he had killed the G'd of the Jews. Originally, they had not

י תְּשִׁיתֵמוֹ כְּתַנּוּר אֵשׁ לְעֵת פָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה בְּאַפּוֹ יְבַלְּעֵם
וְתֹאכְלֵם אֵשׁ:
יא פִּרְיָמוֹ מֵאֶרֶץ תְּאַבֵּד וְזַרְעָם מִבְּנֵי אָדָם:
יב כִּי-נָטוּ עָלֶיךָ רָעָה חָשְׁבוּ מְזִמָּה בַּל-יוּכָלוּ:
יג כִּי תְשִׁיתֵמוֹ שֶׁכֶם בְּמֵיתָרֶיךָ תְּכוֹנֵן עַל-פְּנֵיהֶם:
יד רוּמָה יְהוָה בְּעֻזֶּךָ נָשִׁירָה וּנְזַמְּרָה גְבוּרָתֶךָ:

even thought themselves capable of carrying out their plan, i.e. *mezimah bal yuchalu.*

However, when it got to the stage of *natu alecha ra-ah*, that they thought they could inflict harm on You, Your honour has to respond at some point.

13. Another reason not to let them perish quickly and painlessly is, that not only must they become aware of their own evil and punishment, but they must also witness the advent of the Messiah and his greatness while they are still alive. G'd shows the wicked in purgatory images of what the righteous are enjoying in *gan eden*. (Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 43, about Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish and his former criminal friends.)

Just like the *moreh chitzim*, the archer, prepares his arrows for flights by the tension in the bowstring, so the Messiah has contributed to the flight of G'd's arrows, the "string" being his merits. Israel's merits provide G'd's bow with the tension to shoot off His arrows.

The Psalmist asks that these merits should be the *shechem*, shoulder, i.e. tension point of G'd's bowstrings. *meytarecha*, like *yeter*, i.e. string.

Techonen establish them firmly *al peneyhem*, while they can still see it, make them face them!

14. David summarizes. I have described 2 separate epochs of the kingdom of David. The present era he calls *uzcha*, Your strength; the eventual era of the Messiah, he calls *yeshu-atcha*. Having compared the two eras, David asks that the *ro-memut*, the exalted kingdom of the Messiah in the future, should occur already NOW, in the period of *uzcha*, since it does not contribute to G'd's honour to have the gentiles dance on the ruins of the temple, and congratulate themselves by asking sarcastically "where are His mighty deeds?"

Although I am aware of the fact that "Your mighty deeds" are the very fact that You CAN tolerate gentiles dancing in Your sanctuary

22 [1]*For the leader; on* ayyeleth ha-shahar. *A psalm of David.*
[2]*My God, my God, why have You abandoned me; why so far from delivering me and from my anguished roaring?*
[3]*My God, I cry by day – You answer not; by night, and have no respite.*
[4]*But You are the Holy One, enthroned, the Praise of Israel.*

or on its ruins WITHOUT feeling Your honour besmirched, and feeling provoked into immediate retaliation, who would want to sing about such *gevurot*?

David wants to sing about the kind of mighty deeds that the world recognizes as such. Hence, he asks for *ge-ulah*, redemption now!, i.e. *rumah*, in order that *nashirah* NOW!

Psalm 22

1. Our sages are unanimous that this hymn describes the experiences of Queen Esther. (Yuma 29). If so, we must try and understand why it is described as *mizmor ledavid*, a hymn for David. Also, why are the words *lamenatzeach* and *mizmor ledavid* separated here, as if we were dealing with two distinct hymns, whereas we usually find those words paired together such as in Psalms 4,13,19,20,21 and many others?

Possibly, we can take our cue from the book of Esther 2,5. "A Jew... a Binjaminite, i.e. a man from the tribe of Benjamin". Had David not spared the life of Shimi ben Gerah, Mordechai's ancestor, who had cursed David when the latter was in flight from his son Absalom, and who had therefore incurred the death penalty for both mutinying and insulting the king, (Samuel II 19,22), Mordechai might never have seen the light of day.

Esther, even if queen, would not then have admitted to being Jewish, and could not have become the instrument of her people's salvation.

Besides, Esther, related as she was to Mordechai, had also descended from that same Shimi.

Ayelet Hashachar, is a reference to Esther then. At the same time, credit is due to David for having made Esther possible. Hence we find *mizmor ledavid*, a hymn for David.

2. The repetition of the word *eyli* has been explained in Megillah 15 as reflecting Esther's dismay that the holy spirit had departed from

כב א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-אַיֶּלֶת הַשַּׁחַר מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
ב אֵלִי אֵלִי לָמָה עֲזַבְתָּנִי רָחוֹק מִישׁוּעָתִי דִּבְרֵי
שַׁאֲגָתִי:
ג אֱלֹהַי אֶקְרָא יוֹמָם וְלֹא תַעֲנֶה וְלַיְלָה וְלֹא-דוּמִיָּה לִי:
ד וְאַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִלּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

her when she entered the king's throne chamber (with its idolatrous images).

Her anguish was expressed thus *eyli*, i.e. if you were my G'd before I was married to this uncircumcised person, You have still remained my G'd (I remained loyal) even though I have shared his bedroom which was surrounded by idolatrous images.

Why, therefore, does Your holy spirit forsake me at this critical time?

My outcry, i.e. *divrey shagati*, was not concerned with my own safety. If the king refuses to extend his sceptre to me and executes me, this is a relatively easy fate to bear. But, *rachok mi-yeshuati*, Your withdrawal from me makes my people's deliverance *rachok*, distant, unlikely! Alternatively, Esther calls *eyli* twice, to indicate her doubt if the withdrawal of the holy spirit is due to the impurity of the king's quarters, or whether it presages that G'd will not respond to her pleas for the Jewish people. In case it is the latter, *divrey shagati*, here is my desperate outcry.

3. Esther continues – "even though You have abandoned me thus far", I will not despair and I call on Your mercy. If my request had been turned down by a human king, I might not have repeated it for fear of annoying that king.

But to You o G'd I can appeal all day and all night without fear of annoying You with my pleas, since our relationship is like that of a father with his son. I need not practice silence, *dumiyah*.

4. Midrash Tehillim 114, states that what Jacob studied while in the house of Laban, was the book of Psalms, since it is written here "and You are holy, present, i.e. *yoshev*, when Israel (Jacob) recites *tehillot*, psalms.

If Jacob was able to be inspired by the holy spirit while in the house of Laban, the idolater, why would I, Esther, have to forego the holy spirit when I come to plead for my people at the king's Court?

Or, – if our sages claim that verse 6 of our chapter refers to Israel praying to the Lord at *pi hachirot*, (Exodus 14,2) in the vicinity of the great idol *baal tzafon* are correct, why did the *Shechinah* not

> [5]*In You our fathers trusted; they trusted, and You rescued them.*
> [6]*To You they cried out and they escaped; in You they trusted and were not disappointed.*
> [7]*But I am a worm, less than human; scorned by men, despised by people.*
> [8]*All who see me mock me; they curl their lips, they shake their heads.*
> [9]*"Let him commit himself to the LORD; let Him rescue him, let Him save him, for He is pleased with him."*

withdraw then, whereas from ME it withdraws? (see Yalkut Shimoni 873 on Psalms 150 describing "psalms" being recited in Egypt on the night of deliverance)

Esther is saying "though You G'd are holy, this did not prevent You from being present when Israel recited these *tehillot*!

Psalm 77,7 is seen as a reference to the song sung when Pharaoh ordered the Jewish people to leave Egypt. At that time (while still in Egypt) the Israelites sang Psalm 150.

5. Esther complains that whereas she has to plead with G'd incessantly by day and by night, the Jewish people in Egypt did not need to do so. Their faith in G'd was sufficient *vatefaltemo*, You saved them. (without prayer) (Yalkut Shimoni Hoseah, item 519)

6. When they did cry out to You as Pharaoh and his armies approached, (Exodus 14,10) we read in Shemot Rabbah 21,5, that the Israelites actually waded into the sea before the sea had split, and this was due to their conviction that G'd would save them, i.e. *lo boshu*, they were not deceived.

G'd had to provoke the Israelites into praying to Him, i.e. *vayitzaku*, but this was only because He had made their situation extremely critical. Esther was quite right then in contrasting her situation with that of the Jewish people at the sea, pursued by Pharaoh.

7. Esther says that she is not surprised, after all, that G'd was prepared to save the Israelites at the sea without a prayer, whereas she has been praying incessantly. She ascribes the reason to her own inadequacy, i.e. *anochi tola-at*, I am but a worm, *velo ish*, not worthy as a man. Israel is described on occasion as a worm, seeing its strength lies in its mouth, i.e. in the power of prayer.

The simile is meant to compare the lowly worm to the tall cedars of Lebanon. The worm can destroy them by simply gnawing away at them.

Tiny Israel's prayer is similarly effective against mighty adversaries.

ה בְּךָ בָּטְחוּ אֲבֹתֵינוּ בָּטְחוּ וַתְּפַלְּטֵמוֹ׃
ו אֵלֶיךָ זָעֲקוּ וְנִמְלָטוּ בְּךָ בָּטְחוּ וְלֹא-בוֹשׁוּ׃
ז וְאָנֹכִי תוֹלַעַת וְלֹא-אִישׁ חֶרְפַּת אָדָם וּבְזוּי-עָם׃
ח כָּל-רֹאַי יַלְעִיגוּ לִי יַפְטִירוּ בְשָׂפָה יָנִיעוּ רֹאשׁ׃
ט גֹּל אֶל-יְהוָה יְפַלְּטֵהוּ יַצִּילֵהוּ כִּי חָפֵץ בּוֹ׃

Israel's proper name is *Adam* as stated in Yevamot 61. On other occasions, Israel is called *ish*, such as when the Torah says in Deut. 29,9, "every Israelite is *ish*". The term *tola-at* is a simile used on rare occasions to indicate the opposite of *ish*, which denotes strength.

Esther, not being *ish*, since she is a woman, not a man, therefore describes herself as *tola-at*, worm.

Should one argue that she is *chashuvah*, significant, and therefore included in the general description of Israel as *Adam*, a term denoting even greater stature than *ish*, since G'd personally had created both male and female and had called THEM *Adam* when He had created them, (Genesis 5,2) Esther says *cherpat adam*, I am only a sorry example of *Adam*, seeing that I have no Jewish husband, no soul mate.

(The term *cherpah* is applied to uncircumcised males in Genesis 34,14, when Jacob's sons explain that marriage to their sister Dinah to an uncircumcised person is out of the question).

To the possible objection that Esther was still the outstanding person of her people in her time, she answers that this is not so, but she is *bazuy am*, despised by her nation.

8. Therefore, she pleads "if You G'd do not want to save my people on my account, do so in order that I will not become the scorn of my people".

Everyone who sees me will sneer at me. Not only will they treat me as someone who had once possessed stature and has now lost it, but *yaftiru besafah*, they will speak to me as if I had never had any worth. (the word *yaftiru* from *patar*, begin, as in Proverbs 17,14).

They will conclude by *yaniu rosh*, shaking their heads.

Alternatively, in their hearts they will sneer at me, though their lips *safah* observe the rules of courtesy and they merely shake their heads (without verbalizing their disdain of me.)

9. Though I do not deserve it, since it is Your way to accept the prayers even of unworthy people, if the latter throw themselves repeatedly on Your mercy, – please practice this characteristic of Yours, since *chafetz bo*, G'd wants a person to put his entire trust in

[10]You drew me from the womb, made me secure at my mother's breast.
[11]I became Your charge at birth; from my mother's womb You have been my God.
[12]Do not be far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.
[13]Many bulls surround me, mighty ones of Bashan encircle me.
[14]They open their mouths at me like tearing, roaring lions.
[15]My life ebbs away: all my bones are disjointed; my heart is like wax, melting within me;
[16]my vigor dries up like a shard; my tongue cleaves to my palate; You commit me to the dust of death.

Him. *Gol el hashem* is he who throws himself on G'd's mercy. (from the root of *golle*)

10–11. At first glance, Esther's comment here seems irrelevant. After all, G'd makes every human being leave the womb of his mother and rely on his mother's breast. How can Esther use this experience as a reason to appeal to G'd? Why in verse 11, does she emphasize "I have been CAST from the womb"? Which human being has not been born involuntarily? What does she mean by "You have been my G'd since my mother's womb"?

However, Esther means "why should You despise me, seeing that You have been my G'd since BEFORE I was born!"

The reference is to a statement in the Talmud Megillah 13, on the verse (Esther 2,7) "when her father and mother died". We are told that Esther's father died after she had been conceived, whereas her mother died in childbirth, when she was being born. Since she had neither a father nor a mother to nurse her, G'd had to equip Mordechai who had adopted her with teats to enable him to nurse her. Esther therefore turns to G'd, reminding Him that He had NOT provided her with normal means of survival when she had been born, that she had relied on G'd at an earlier age than any other human being.

12. Esther emphasizes that the danger to her people is *kerovah*, at hand, although the execution date of the decree is 11 months away. (Esther 3,13) However, since the decree had been signed, and there was no advocate on behalf of the Jewish people, she considers it as if the execution date were close at hand.

י כִּי-אַתָּה גֹחִי מִבָּטֶן מַבְטִיחִי עַל-שְׁדֵי אִמִּי:
יא עָלֶיךָ הָשְׁלַכְתִּי מֵרָחֶם מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי אֵלִי אָתָּה:
יב אַל-תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנִּי כִּי-צָרָה קְרוֹבָה כִּי אֵין עוֹזֵר:
יג סְבָבוּנִי פָּרִים רַבִּים אַבִּירֵי בָשָׁן כִּיתְּרוּנִי:
יד פָּצוּ עָלַי פִּיהֶם אַרְיֵה טֹרֵף וְשֹׁאֵג:
טו כַּמַּיִם נִשְׁפַּכְתִּי וְהִתְפָּרְדוּ כָּל-עַצְמוֹתָי הָיָה לִבִּי כַּדּוֹנָג נָמֵס בְּתוֹךְ מֵעָי:
טז יָבֵשׁ כַּחֶרֶשׂ כֹּחִי וּלְשׁוֹנִי מָדְבָּק מַלְקוֹחָי וְלַעֲפַר-מָוֶת תִּשְׁפְּתֵנִי:

13. My plea that You NOT distance Yourself from me, was not based on my guilt for marrying Ahasverus, for I did so under duress, having been surrounded by many "bulls", i.e. superior forces. These "bulls" had been rounding up girls all over the kingdom. The book of Esther testifies to the fact that Esther did not voluntarily take part in the beauty contest, but was taken to the palace against her wishes. (Esther 2,16)

The coercion continued, i.e. ***abirey bashan kitruni***, I was encircled by Bashan's mightiest. They forced the crown on me.

14. They misinterpreted my sadness when I became queen claiming that I acted just like a lion, who while about to claim his prey, cries as if in distress.

15. The reason they speak about me in this fashion, says Esther, is that instead of my health (my bonestructure ***atzamot***) improving as a result of the good news at being elevated to the status of queen (Proverbs 15,30), I experience the reverse, due to so much worry and concern that through association with idol worship the normal beneficial effects of "all my bones proclaim the Lord" (Psalms 35,10) is being reversed.

16. Surely G'd, it is evident that my elevation to queen, and my forced association with idol worshippers was initiated by YOU, since my very existence required YOUR miraculous intercession. Surely You would not have troubled Yourself and performed such miracles for me if You did not have further plans for me! When I was taken to the king, all my strength had dried up, I lost my power of speech since my tongue stuck to my palate already.

If, nonetheless, I was suddenly revived, to face the king and make a good impression on him, surely You have demonstrated by this that

17Dogs surround me; a pack of evil ones closes in on me, like lions [they maul] my hands and feet.
18I take the count of all my bones while they look on and gloat.
19They divide my clothes among themselves, casting lots for my garments.
20But You, O LORD, be not far off; my strength, hasten to my aid.
21Save my life from the sword, my precious life from the clutches of a dog.
22Deliver me from a lion's mouth; from the horns of wild oxen rescue me.

You had an ulterior purpose. Had I been revived to be married to a Jew who is considered *afar*, dust, (but living dust) this might not have been so miraculous. (Genesis 3,19 describes Adam as being dust while alive as well as after being dead. A gentile is compared to death already while alive, just as are all sinners, hence they can be termed "dead dust".)

Esther's union according to this is conceived as a union between "live dust" and "dead dust". Esther, being conceived of as "dust", makes her a passive participant in the marriage with Ahasverus, not guilty of any offense, such as intermarriage. Since this union had only come about by her miraculous revival, it must indicate some plan of G'd for her.

17. Esther describes her experience as totally unnatural. When a person is about to die, strength ebbs first from the extremities of the body, such as the hands and feet, whereas the area near the seat of the soul still feels alive. Her experience has been exactly the reverse, her hands and feet feel lion like strength.

Similarly, when coming back to life, the extremities should be the last to feel rejuvenated. Esther experienced loss of the power of speech first, i.e. the departure of life from her vital parts. She assumes the reason to be that she should not be able to refuse the Royal captors. In other words, the dogs who surrounded me like unsavory characters, *adat me-reyim hikifuni* wanted me to declare my willingness to marry the king.

All of this could only mean that G'd had planned something miraculous for her, hence she prays "do not let me weaken".

18. Another proof that my appointment as queen was engineered by You, is the fact that I had tried to point out the inadequacies of my

יז כִּי סְבָבוּנִי כְלָבִים עֲדַת מְרֵעִים הִקִּיפוּנִי כָּאֲרִי יָדַי
וְרַגְלָי:
יח אֲסַפֵּר כָּל-עַצְמוֹתָי הֵמָּה יַבִּיטוּ יִרְאוּ-בִי:
יט יְחַלְּקוּ בְגָדַי לָהֶם וְעַל לְבוּשִׁי יַפִּילוּ גוֹרָל:
כ וְאַתָּה יְהוָה אַל-תִּרְחָק אֱיָלוּתִי לְעֶזְרָתִי חוּשָׁה:
כא הַצִּילָה מֵחֶרֶב נַפְשִׁי מִיַּד-כֶּלֶב יְחִידָתִי:
כב הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִפִּי אַרְיֵה וּמִקַּרְנֵי רֵמִים עֲנִיתָנִי:

bones, i.e. *asaper kol atzmotai*, whereas they (the king's beauticians) saw all this. (and ignored it)

19. I have found so much favour in their eyes (the king's beauticians and officers) that they want to raffle off my garments, while supplying me with a new wardrobe from the king. Surely, all this is so unusual as to point to Divine interference.

20. Therefore, I plead with You G'd NOT to remain aloof now, since You have given me this strength. (after I had already been like dead) I know You will aid me, but I ask *chushah*, do it quickly, do it soon!

21. Save *nafshi*, my person, my body from the king's sword, i.e. his anger at my uninvited appearance in his throne chamber. But, beyond this, and of even greater importance, save my *ruach*, my spirit! If my marriage to this king does NOT produce the salvation of my people, – then the impurity due to cohabiting with him will cling to me like a dog. Esther hopes that the fact that she remains alive presages that she will succeed in securing her people's survival.

22. The Talmud Gittin 68, commenting on Numbers 24,8 "is for him (Israel) like the horns of the wild ox", says that *Toafot* are the ministering angels, whereas *re-eym* are the *sheydim*, the demons. The forces of Haman and Amalek are equated with the demons, the forces of Satan, described by David as *karney re-eymim*. Esther says that if the king will speak to her unkindly, even if he does NOT execute her, she remains in doubt if G'd has accepted her plea to save Israel from Haman and his ilk.

"Save me from the mouth of the lion", i.e. do not let the king speak to me unkindly! This will be equivalent to saving Israel from the *karney re-eymim*.

Esther credits Israel's merit with saving her on this dangerous mission, since she had undertaken it for a sacred purpose, to save

23*Then will I proclaim Your fame to my brethren, praise*
You in the congregation.
24*You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you offspring*
of Jacob, honor Him! Be in dread of Him, all you
offspring of Israel!
25*For He did not scorn, He did not spurn the plea of the*
lowly; He did not hide His face from him; when he cried
out to Him, He listened.
26*Because of You I offer praise in the great*
congregation; I pay my vows in the presence of His
worshipers.
27*Let the lowly eat and be satisfied; let all who seek the*
LORD praise Him. Always be of good cheer!

her people. When on that kind of a mission, one is entitled to Divine protection.

23. The Talmud Megillah 14 states that the reason we do not recite the *Hallel* prayer on Purim is because reading of the book of Esther which describes Israel's miraculous deliverance is equivalent to the recital of *Hallel* in which we recall other miraculous deliverances. Esther uses the same rationale here. The *asaprah*, I will tell, refers to the ruling to read the *megillah* on Purim. It is a reference to the book which bears Esther's name.

Possibly, Esther distinguishes here between *echay*, my brothers as meaning the members of her tribe Benjamin, and *betoch kahal*, amid the community, i.e. the Jewish people as a whole.

We read in Esther 4,14, that Mordechai had threatened Esther with extinction for herself and her family, while G'd would deliver the Jewish people using some other instrument.

We need to understand why Esther's original refusal to intercede with the king, – a life and death gamble by her, considering she had been out of favour with the king for failing to tell him her nationality (Esther 2,20) – should result in such extreme punishment.

Haman would not have been born, if Esther's ancestor, king Saul had not allowed Agog the king of Amalek to live. The latter could not have sired Haman's ancestor. (Samuel I 15,9) This sin by Saul had still not been rectified. If Esther, in a position to absolve her ancestor and her family from this residual guilt, would FAIL to do so now, Mordechai told her that her family including herself would not deserve to survive. Hence, in thanking G'd for the deliverance, the members of her tribe had an additional reason to thank the Lord, namely for

כג אֲסַפְּרָה שִׁמְךָ לְאֶחָי בְּתוֹךְ קָהָל אֲהַלְלֶךָּ׃
כד יִרְאֵי יְהוָה הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל-זֶרַע יַעֲקֹב כַּבְּדוּהוּ וְגוּרוּ
מִמֶּנּוּ כָּל-זֶרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל׃
כה כִּי לֹא-בָזָה וְלֹא שִׁקַּץ עֱנוּת עָנִי וְלֹא-הִסְתִּיר פָּנָיו
מִמֶּנּוּ וּבְשַׁוְּעוֹ אֵלָיו שָׁמֵעַ׃
כו מֵאִתְּךָ תְּהִלָּתִי בְּקָהָל רָב נְדָרַי אֲשַׁלֵּם נֶגֶד יְרֵאָיו׃
כז יֹאכְלוּ עֲנָוִים וְיִשְׂבָּעוּ יְהַלְלוּ יְהוָה דֹּרְשָׁיו יְחִי
לְבַבְכֶם לָעַד׃

finally having been exonerated from the as yet unexpurgated guilt of their ancestor king Saul.

24. This verse calls on all of Israel, *kol zera Yisrael* to celebrate Purim by reading the Megillah and eating and drinking, i.e. *kabduhu*. Esther calls on all to display reverence for HIM (who has saved the Jewish people).

This is similar to David's call to serve the Lord with joy, while maintaining a relationship of awe.

25. It is they, i.e. the poor who helped save you, not the 3 day fast (Esther 4,16) Ahasverus had NOT invited the poor to his party. (Esther 4,16 see the Targum). The poor had therefore not been guilty of eating forbidden food on that occasion and had not contributed to the withdrawal of G'd's presence. Neither had Nebuchadnezzar demanded that the poor Jews bow down to his image. (Daniel chapter 3.) Since the poor participated in the 3 day fast although they had not been guilty of disloyalty to G'd, G'd responded to the fasting and prayers immediately.

26. The Jewish people respond "my praise comes from You", i.e. the *megillah* will be read in a great assembly, *kahal rav*. Its contents are inspired by You, i.e. *me-ittcha*. Therefore my vows, i.e. my donations to the poor I will pay in the presence of those who truly revere You. I need not fear that this PUBLIC handout embarrasses the poor, since on Purim NO ONE feels ashamed. On that day alms are handed out even to those who are not entitled to ask for them, but stretch out their hands nonetheless.

27. The humble ones shall also eat and be satisfied, i.e. I shall prepare a meal for them apart from the monetary gifts I will give them on the occasion of Purim. The purpose of such a meal is to enable them to praise the Lord and those who seek Him out, i.e. who

28*Let all the ends of the earth pay heed and turn to the LORD, and the peoples of all nations prostrate themselves before You;*
29*for kingship is the LORD's and He rules the nations.*
30*All those in full vigor shall eat and prostrate themselves; all those at death's door, whose spirits flag, shall bend the knee before Him.*
31*Offspring shall serve Him; the LORD's fame shall be proclaimed to the generation to come; they shall tell of His beneficence to people yet to be born, for He has acted.*

23 1*A psalm of David.*
The LORD is my shepherd; I lack nothing.
2*He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me to water in places of repose;*

publicly proclaim thanks for the deliverance. The celebration of Purim shall embrace *levavchem*, both your hearts, i.e. the physical as well as the spiritual, since it was the physical life of the people that had been in danger.

28. Another reason for the celebration is that on that occasion Israel TRULY recognized You and returned to You wholeheartedly, – whereas the gentiles did not seize this opportunity to forsake their deities and will not do so till the advent of the Messiah.

29. They will do so only when all power will be concentrated in the hands of G'd, and He will humble all the nations.

30. All the while they are eating, and then they bow, i.e. the nations who live on the fat of the land, prior to the advent of the Messiah.

They will not humble themselves before Him until the Messiah comes. But at that time, when converts to Judaism will not be accepted (Avodah Zarah 3), their collective soul, i.e. *nafsho* will not live.

31. We explained at the outset that the reason the hymn is also called a hymn to David is because if David had executed Shimi ben Gerah as he was legally entitled to do, Esther and Mordechai his offspring would never have been born and could not have orchestrated Haman's downfall.

David therefore concludes the Psalm by stating that having related all this, he does not feel guilty for having allowed Shimi to survive at

כח יִזְכְּרוּ וְיָשֻׁבוּ אֶל-יְהוָה כָּל-אַפְסֵי-אָרֶץ וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ
לְפָנֶיךָ כָּל-מִשְׁפְּחוֹת גּוֹיִם:
כט כִּי לַיהוָה הַמְּלוּכָה וּמוֹשֵׁל בַּגּוֹיִם:
ל אָכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ כָּל-דִּשְׁנֵי-אֶרֶץ לְפָנָיו יִכְרְעוּ כָּל-
יוֹרְדֵי עָפָר וְנַפְשׁוֹ לֹא חִיָּה:
לא זֶרַע יַעַבְדֶנּוּ יְסֻפַּר לַאדֹנָי לַדּוֹר:
לב יָבֹאוּ וְיַגִּידוּ צִדְקָתוֹ לְעַם נוֹלָד כִּי עָשָׂה:

כג א מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד יְהוָה רֹעִי לֹא אֶחְסָר:
ב בִּנְאוֹת דֶּשֶׁא יַרְבִּיצֵנִי עַל מֵי מְנוּחוֹת יְנַהֲלֵנִי:

that time since Shimi's descendants have served G'd as an instrument of salvation. Even though not having been born yet, at the time when David composed this hymn – this is being told to G'd as if it had taken place already now, – as a justification to spare Shimi.

32. I am announcing – with the help of the holy spirit – that these people will be born, and will retroactively justify Shimi's continued existence.

The *am nolad*, is the generation of Jews at the time of Haman, who are CONSIDERED as having been born a second time. (after the decree of Ahasverus and Haman had had the effect of considering them as dead already).

Psalm 23

1. We have explained in our commentary on Ezekiel 34,31, that being called "flock, or sheep" is no insult, seeing that we are G'd's flock. Similarly here. The Psalmist states that as long as "G'd is my shepherd, I do not feel deprived or denigrated".

Being looked after by G'd personally, when He acts as our shepherd, indicates a superior status compared with having one's livelihood provided only through one or more of G'd's agents. Your true worth is described by the fact that you are called *ADAM*. (in that verse in Ezekiel, see also Yevamot 61)

Idol worshippers do not qualify for that term.

2. Even if He makes me lie down in green pastures, He will still lead me to ***mey menuchot***, i.e. to ***gan eden***, the hereafter.

3He renews my life; He guides me in right paths as befits His name.
4Though I walk through a valley of deepest darkness, I fear no harm, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff – they comfort me.
5You spread a table for me in full view of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my drink is abundant.

Man's task in this world is to become like the *ochley man*, the generation of the desert who were fed Mannah by G'd, and who focused on the food supply that descended right next to their tents. Beyond that, G'd's largesse, in certain cases, may even come right into one's house.

We find a paradox here. He who receives G'd's largesse in his home, does not need to exert himself AT ALL for securing his livelihood. The normal person however, experiences something like the sheep who have to leave home to go out to graze in the pasture, where they are exposed to the sun's heat by day and to the cold at night. They enjoy serenity, i.e. peace, comfort etc. only after they return home from the pasture. Similarly, average man. He amasses his wealth while away from home, working, but he rests at home. What does David mean then when he asks that G'd should make him "lie down in the pastures", i.e. be inactive THERE?

David employs the metaphor of this PARTICULAR pasture as indicating that THERE one can find one's livelihood WITHOUT the usual problems, such as excessive heat by day or cold by night. One is NOT exposed to nature's caprice, something which one is otherwise safe against only at home.

Although I will receive all these blessings in this world, says David, *al mey menuchot yenahaleyni*, He will lead me to the hereafter, i.e. the still waters, to the security of *gan eden*.

3. Not only do I not worry about losing my share in the hereafter if I experience G'd's generosity in this life, but I am not even concerned about the preliminary painful experiences which some *tzaddikim*, righteous people undergo at or immediately after death, before they enter *gan eden*. He sets my soul at rest and I will proceed to *gan eden* immediately, is what David is convinced of.

Concerning those who die at the hands of the angel of death and thus experience some degree of pain when dying, David says *yancheyni* he Himself leads me *bemaagley tzedek* in a closed circuit of *tzedek*, righteousness. Concerning those who after death have to undergo a refining process in purgatory to rid themselves of the

ג נַפְשִׁי יְשׁוֹבֵב יַנְחֵנִי בְמַעְגְּלֵי-צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ׃
ד גַּם כִּי-אֵלֵךְ בְּגֵיא צַלְמָוֶת לֹא-אִירָא רָע כִּי-אַתָּה
עִמָּדִי שִׁבְטְךָ וּמִשְׁעַנְתֶּךָ הֵמָּה יְנַחֲמֻנִי׃
ה תַּעֲרֹךְ לְפָנַי שֻׁלְחָן נֶגֶד צֹרְרָי דִּשַּׁנְתָּ בַשֶּׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי
כוֹסִי רְוָיָה׃

pollution of unatoned for sins, David says that he is not worried about this becoming his fate. The closed circuit of his righteous deeds will surely protect him against such a fate.

4. Even if after death, on his way to *gan eden*, he will pass by the portals of purgatory (compare our commentary on Psalms 16, verse 10), when I might be joined by some sinner from there, I do not worry that any sin of mine would cause me to be sucked into purgatory while I am passing there. (Midrash Tanchumah on *vezot habrachah*, section 3, tells of Moses expressing himself in a similar fashion).

The reason David does not worry, i.e. *lo ira* that G'd's largesse experienced in this life would corrupt him, is his conviction *ki attah imadi*, that You have been with me, have saved me from sinning.

Still, notwithstanding my confidence that Your generous blessings with material benefits would NOT corrupt me, I prefer afflictions, i.e. *shivtecha umishantecha*, Your disciplining rod, since to rely on THAT gives me greater comfort, *hemo yenachamuni*.

Or, – Your disciplinary rod, employed to discipline me without making me fall, – are the instruments which really comfort me.

5. If I am subject to such afflictions, I am certain that YOU will prepare my table in front of me, i.e. that I will not be consuming part of my merits already in this life, as almost happened with Rabbi Chaninah ben Dotha. (Taanit 25)

When that Rabbi had experienced miraculous relief of poverty, (by means of a golden leg), he had a dream in which his share in the hereafter was depicted as a table with only two legs, whereas everybody else's table had three legs. He told his wife (who had been complaining about their poverty) about this dream, and asked her whether she would be content to be eating at a two legged table in the hereafter. With her agreement, – the golden leg was returned to heaven.

We also learned in Pirkey de Rabbi Eliezer 43, that the former colleagues of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish (who had become a *baal teshuvah* – were shown his place in *gan eden* while they were themselves in purgatory. David asks that while G'd arranges his

6*Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for many long years.*

24 *Of David. A psalm.*
The earth is the LORD's and all that it holds, the world and its inhabitants.

"table" in the hereafter, this will be ***neged tzoreray***, opposite, i.e. in full view of his oppressors. He wants them to be shown that though he had enjoyed ***shemen roshi***, the oil used to anoint him as king, i.e. the blessings of this world, ***kossi revayah***, his cup had remained full, i.e. he had not consumed any part of his merit in this world, i.e. had not lost one iota of his eventual reward.

6. The main reason that I have not jeopardized any of my share in the world to come, says David, is that the amount of worldly enjoyment I have experienced has been very limited. Our sages say that the words ***ach*** and ***rak*** always denote something lacking, something missing. (Yerushalmi Berachot 9,7) Hence, ***ach tov...yirdefuni***, the good which has pursued me was limited.

After all, my enemies pursued me all the days of my life, so that the principal reason for my portion in the hereafter are the afflictions I have had to endure. This is why even the crown of my kingdom, i.e. my elevated status has NOT led me into forfeiting any part of my ***olam haba*** share in the hereafter.

Kossi revayah, my cup remains full, i.e. I have not used up any of the merits I have accumulated during my life on this earth, ***le-orech yamim***, for the life which is truly long lasting. Then I will return to the house of the Lord, i.e. the third temple, a spiritual residence which will become my principal residence.

Psalm 24

A) What news is David telling us by saying "the earth and all that is therein belongs to G'd? B) Why does he repeat: a) the universe, ***tevel***, and b) all its inhabitants? C) Why the change in style when describing the earth and "all therein", whereas the universe and "all its inhabitants"?

(The author continues with a list of 30 such questions before commencing his answers. Since the author himself has stated at the beginning of the book that he does not list most of such questions in

ו אַךְ טוֹב וָחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל-יְמֵי חַיָּי וְשַׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית יְהוָה לְאֹרֶךְ יָמִים:

כד

א לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר לַיהוָה הָאָרֶץ וּמְלוֹאָהּ תֵּבֵל וְיֹשְׁבֵי בָהּ:

the interest of brevity, (as opposed to his commentary on Pentateuch), this editor omits them and trusts the reader to be able to reconstruct them once he has read the answers.)

It is worth remembering that our sages in Taanit 10, based on Proverbs 8,26 "until He had made eretz and chutzot", state, that G'd created the land of Israel, i.e. *eretz* and only subsequently the rest of the globe, i.e. *chutzot*.

Also, they have taught us in Zohar Bereshit 225, that the atmosphere is not empty, but full of disembodied *kochot*, forces, sources of energy. Hence the Rabbis taught that when a *tzaddik* takes a walk, the angels call out "make way for the image of the king".

However, the *kochot* occupying the atmosphere of the land of Israel are quite different from those filling the atmosphere elsewhere.

Another statement of our sages worth remembering is that the first temple was built due to the merit of Abraham. The second temple was built due to the merit of Isaac, whereas the third and last temple will be built due to the merit of Jacob.

This is what our sages had in mind when they said that Abraham called the temple *har*, mountain. (Genesis 22,14 "on the mountain of G'd He will be visible) Isaac called the temple *sadeh*, field. (Genesis 24,63. "Isaac went out to THE field to pray, to meditate) Jacob, on the other hand called the temple *bayit*, house. (Genesis 28,17, "this must be the house of G'd and the gateway to heaven") (Pessachim 88).

We have explained in our commentary on the Pentateuch that the reason Abraham called the temple "mountain" was because he foresaw that it would be destroyed and would remain merely as a mountain. When naming it, he referred to its ultimate destiny. Isaac, knowing that the site of the second temple would be ploughed over after its destruction, like a field, also called it by its ultimate destiny. Jacob, aware that the third temple would endure, called it "house", meaning *bayit ne-eman* a true home.

At the same time, our sages have described the glory of the first

2For He founded it upon the ocean, set it on the nether-streams.
3Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? who may stand in His holy place?-

temple as superior to that of the second temple, seeing 5 important items were missing in the second temple. They were: the holy ark, the lid with the cherubs, i.e. also the *urim vetumim* in the High Priest's breastplate, the celestial fire for burning the incense, and the *ruach hakodesh* (prophecy), *Shechinah*. (Yuma 21)

At any rate the glory of the third temple will far surpass even that of the first temple.

Another thing we need to remember before explaining this Psalm, is that the principal dissemination of the *Shechinah*, G'd's Presence is NOT within the tabernacle or temple, – since man could not provide a physical home for G'd the purely abstract – but is within the spirit of man, as the prophet has stated in Jeremiah 7,4 *heychal hashem, heychal hashem heymah*. This is a reference to Exodus 25,8 "they will make a sanctuary for Me so that I shall dwell within them". (their spirit). The Torah carefully refrains from saying "I shall dwell within it" (meaning the tabernacle). The task of man is to harbour G'd's spirit within him.

The *tzaddikim* on earth are the repository of G'd's Presence. Because they are, G'd's Presence also manifests itself in the temple. It is the souls of the Jewish people then who can determine the degree of sanctity of the temple, and whether G'd's Presence is able to manifest itself on earth or not.

This is what Solomon had meant when he said at the inauguration of the temple *bano baniti*, literally, "I have built I have built" a sanctuary". The building was a "dual" building, had its invisible counterpart in the celestial regions called *zevul*. (compare Kings I 8,13)

This concept was reflected throughout the time the temple stood by what the Rabbis have called *omdin tzefufim, mishtachavim revachim*, when the people stood they felt squeezed, whereas then they prostrated themselves in worship, there was ample room for everybody. (Yuma 21)

David wants to give us guidelines how to ensure that G'd's *Shechinah* can take root in this murky world of ours, so that man should not despair of such a possibility by saying that G'd is far too superior, and earth far too inferior, for such a fusion to be possible. Before David can give us the recipe for securing the Presence of G'd

ב כִּי הוּא עַל-יַמִּים יְסָדָהּ וְעַל-נְהָרוֹת יְכוֹנְנֶהָ׃
ג מִי-יַעֲלֶה בְהַר יְהוָה וּמִי-יָקוּם בִּמְקוֹם-קָדְשׁוֹ׃

on earth, he must remind us that earth as well as man is part of G'd's domain.

1. When David says "the earth belongs to G'd etc." the word *eretz* refers to the land of Israel, i.e. THE earth, a known quantity.

When he speaks about *tevel*, without the definitive article, he refers to the rest of the globe. In the land of Israel, everything, i.e. *melo-ah* whatever it is filled with, all the powers active within its atmosphere are the Lord's, are divinely inspired, not the outgrowth of negative spiritual forces. This is so because G'd created it first. (as we explained earlier)

Since EVERYTHING is filled with a measure of holiness in *eretz yisrael*, the same certainly applies also to its inhabitants.

In the case of *tevel*, the rest of the globe, though the atmosphere is contaminated also with disembodied negative forces, nonetheless *yoshvey bah* those who dwell therein are G'd's direct creatures, have been stamped with the *tzelem elokim*, the image of G'd.

2. Proof that G'd has created earth, – not the sea, or nature at large – lies in the fact that He founded it ON the oceans. (compare Psalms 136,6) Seeing that the oceans tower over the dry land and are held back from flooding earth, it is clear that only Divine directives can account for that. G'd also established earth firmly on the rivers, i.e. the 4 rivers mentioned in Genesis 2,10, – emanating in *gan eden*.

In their origin, these 4 rivers are to be viewed as 4 diverse spiritual streams which, upon leaving *gan eden* become tangible and provide water throughout the earth. The Talmud in Bechorot 55 goes so far as to state halachically, that if someone vows not to drink from the "waters which originate in the river Euphratus", he may NOT drink ANY water. This is because all the waters in the "lower" world originate from Euphratus, including the 3 rivers Pishon, Chidekel and Gichon.

Bereshit Rabbah 16,3 tells us that the river Euphratus acquired the adjective "the great river", since it flows around *eretz yisrael*. All the above confirms that the phenomena in our "lower" world can all be traced back to spiritual forces.

Another thought that David has in mind when he describes *ha-aretz u—melo-ah* is that He (G'd) is the *makom ha-olam*, the site of the universe, (compare Bereshit Rabbah 68,10) all the world is His.

3. Having established that the universe did not precede G'd but vice versa, David now turns to advise us how to ensure continued

[4]He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not taken a false oath by My life or sworn deceitfully.
[5]He shall carry away a blessing from the LORD, a just reward from God, his deliverer.

intimate relationship between the Creator and His creatures, i.e. how to secure His Presence within the hearts of man. Man must not argue that if G'd created matter, – why does He not make His residence on earth instead of in the celestial spheres? Surely then earth is NOT His domain!

Even if from time to time, G'd does make an appearance on earth, – so runs this faulty argument – it is only during brief interludes, to wit the ruins of two temples.

David counters by listing the prerequisites for G'd's permanent residence on earth.

There have been two people whose merit brought G'd down to earth, Abraham and Jacob. In the case of Abraham, his success was of limited duration. Jacob's success however, will endure. Abraham's merit produced the first temple, – Jacob's will produce the third temple.

The reason David does not mention anything about the second temple and Isaac's merit is, because of its inferiority to the first temple. Since even the first temple did not endure, the second temple was unlikely to.

Mi ya-aleh, who possesses the purity of heart to climb the mountain of G'd, i.e. the temple, as envisaged by Abraham?

Mi yakum bimkom kodsho, who can maintain a posture in the place of His holiness, i.e. permanently? *mekom kodsho* hints at a place of superior sanctity, a reference to the temple due to the merit of Jacob.

If G'd APPEARS to have abandoned earth, it is NOT because this is NOT His domain, but because only at rare intervals did any of His creatures enable Him to feel welcome.

4. The kind of person by whose merit the first temple was established, is someone who was totally pure in thought and deed, i.e. *neki chapayim u-var levav*, with both portions of his heart, *levav*. Concerning his deeds, Abraham had said to the king of Sodom that he waived his claim to the booty. (Genesis 14,22) Concerning his purity of heart, we read in Nechemyah 9,8 "You have found his heart (dual) true before you".

The *mi yakum* refers to Jacob. The fact that David does NOT

ד נְקִי כַפַּיִם וּבַר לֵבָב אֲשֶׁר לֹא-נָשָׂא לַשָּׁוְא נַפְשִׁי וְלֹא
נִשְׁבַּע לְמִרְמָה:
ה יִשָּׂא בְרָכָה מֵאֵת יְהוָה וּצְדָקָה מֵאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעוֹ:

continue "AND who did not lift up his soul etc." but *asher* did not lift up his soul is proof that David here refers to someone OTHER than the subject of *mi ya-aleh*.

We find the expression *ve-elav hu nosseh et nafsho*, in Deut. 24,15 "he sets his heart on it", referring to the labourer's wages. Jacob, i.e. the person by whose merit G'd's Presence is drawn to earth, does not set his heart on vain things, *lashav*, i.e. on transient values such as wages in this world. He demonstrated this when he told Laban in answer to the question "what shall be your wages?" (Genesis 30,31) "do not give me anything". He did not even want the compensation for his labours to come from his employer, preferring to rely on G'd for his needs.

When Rebeccah had suggested that Jacob take "Esau's blessing, Jacob had not wanted to, because he saw no sense in being blessed with transient values. (see our commentary on Genesis chapter 27) (Jacob there referred to *chalak* smooth, as a variant of the word *chelek*, part, i.e. he felt himself to be part of the Divine, as in *ki chelek hashem ammo*, for His people are part of Him.)

Bereshit Rabbah 100,5, describes Jacob as paying Esau for the right to be buried on Machpelah. This is another instance of Jacob spurning terrestrial values. When Laban demanded an oath from Jacob, (Genesis 31,48–54) he did not swear by the G'd of Abraham and Nachor, as proposed, but he swore only by the G'd of Isaac. Had he accepted Laban's proposal, his oath would not have been binding, since he certainly would not have acknowledged Nachor's idols as deities. He demonstrated his *bar levav*, purity of heart, by swearing *bepachad Yitzchak*, by the G'd whom only Isaac had revered. This is why David refers to *velo nishba lemirma*, he did not use the oath to swear deceitfully.

5. Therefore, – the one who demonstrates *neki kapayim*, clean hands, receives a blessing from G'd, i.e. *yissa berachah*, i.e. the temple will be built due to his merit, but it will not endure forever.

However, the one who spurned material wealth, i.e. Jacob, *yissa tzedakah*, will receive *tzedakah* of which we know that it endures forever, (Psalms 11,2) *omedet la-ad*. In other words, the temple which will be built as a specific reward for Jacob's merit, will endure.

6 *Such is the circle of those who turn to Him, Jacob, who seek Your presence.* Selah.
7 *O gates, lift up your heads! Up high, you everlasting doors, so the King of glory may come in!*
8 *Who is the King of glory?– the LORD, mighty and valiant, the LORD, valiant in battle.*
9 *O gates, lift up your heads! Lift them up, you everlasting doors, so the King of glory may come in!*

6. The generation which David describes is his own, in which the foundations of the first temple are being laid. *Dorshav* those who seek Him out, is a lesser degree of attachment to G'd than those who are *mevakshe panecha*, who seek Your face. Hence, the former results in a temple which does not endure, whereas the latter is akin to Jacob, *selah* enduring forever. This is parallel to what we read at the end of the *shirat hayam*, the song of thanksgiving Israel sang at the shores of the sea of reeds in Exodus 15,17, when they asked to be planted securely in the mountain of G'd, i.e. never to be uprooted.

7. We have said that the *Shechinah* can be drawn to earth and to the temple by two means. The first is by means of individuals who are of such outstanding calibre that their souls become conduits bringing G'd's Presence to earth. They transfer the *Shechinah* from the celestial sanctuary to that on earth.

Their ability to do this lies in what we explained about the verse in Jeremiah 7,4, *heychal hashem hemah*, they are the sanctuary of G'd. Their souls are the portals through which G'd's largesse is channelled earthward.

David in his holy spirit, refers to two such outstanding individuals, both of whom enable Israel to receive the holy ark and the Presence of G'd in the terrestrial temple.

You may ask that since *mal-ah kol ha-aretz kevodoh*, the whole earth is filled with His glory, what is so special about G'd's Presence in the temple? There is a difference between *kavod*, glory, and *melech hakavod*, the king of glory.

Emanations of glory are one thing, they hint at the center of glory ELSEWHERE. When the *melech hakavod* king of glory descends into our domain, that is a compliment to His subjects.

The *she-arim*, portals of the terrestrial temple, to be built by Solomon, are to raise their heads to welcome and form the platform for the *pitchey olam*, the portals of the celestial sanctuary, traditionally opposite the temple in Jerusalem.

ו זֶה דּוֹר דֹּרְשָׁו מְבַקְשֵׁי פָנֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב סֶלָה:
ז שְׂאוּ שְׁעָרִים רָאשֵׁיכֶם וְהִנָּשְׂאוּ פִּתְחֵי עוֹלָם וְיָבוֹא
מֶלֶךְ הַכָּבוֹד:
ח מִי זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכָּבוֹד יְהוָה עִזּוּז וְגִבּוֹר יְהוָה גִּבּוֹר
מִלְחָמָה:
ט שְׂאוּ שְׁעָרִים רָאשֵׁיכֶם וּשְׂאוּ פִּתְחֵי עוֹלָם וְיָבוֹא מֶלֶךְ
הַכָּבוֹד:

The relationship of the *Shechinah* and the people of Israel, is like that of body and soul. Though the soul suffuses the body, though the eye cannot see when there is no soul in the body, ONLY the eye can see, since seeing is an intangible activity, i.e. spiritual in nature. It therefore reflects the fact that we have a *nefesh*, soul. No other parts of the body are equipped with the ability to see.

Similarly, though G'd's glory fills the earth, the "eyes" of G'd are found only in the temple. By the appropriate gesture of the portals of the temple down here, David foresees G'd's Presence on earth.

8. In another vision he also foresees the destruction of the temple. He does not comment on that until provoked by the challenge "where is your G'd, your Saviour" and other similar comments heaping scorn on our faith and belittling G'd.

David refers to this by saying that there will come a time when the gentiles will ask "who is this king of glory?" (sarcastically)

The minds of those gentiles are swollen with their own importance, they do not realize that the greatness i.e. *izuz vegibor* of G'd, lies in the fact that He does not feel the need to respond to every provocation, to prove Himself in the eyes of the blasphemer.

Nonetheless, G'd will not suffer such blasphemies forever. There will come a day when He will be seen universally as *gibor milchamah*, a mighty hero of warfare.

9. At such a time, His glory will be revealed, and the Presence of His *Shechinah* will be permanent. This will be due to Jacob's merit. At that time (Isaiah 4,3) the surviving Jewish society will all be of such calibre that they themselves can be the conduits of the *Shechinah*. Therefore, there is no need for preparation, intermediary, i.e. *hinassu*, become uplifted! such as in verse 7. All that needs to be said to that generation then will be *se-u pitchey olam*, carry the portals of the celestial sanctuary, receive Divine inspiration directly, without intermediaries.

10*Who is the King of glory?– the LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory!* Selah.

25 *Of David.*
O LORD, I set my hope on You;
2*my God, in You I trust; may I not be disappointed, may my enemies not exult over me.*
3*O let none who look to You be disappointed; let the faithless be disappointed, empty-handed.*

10. Then there will not again be destruction, and no one will ask sarcastically "who is the king of glory?", because they dance on the ruins of His temple.

Rather, His glory will be revealed to all, and all the righteous of Israel will see it with their own eyes. Midrash Rabbah Vayikra 11,9, tells us that in the future G'd Himself will dance at the head of a circle of *tzaddikim*. (based on Psalms 48,13 and the alternate spelling of the word *cheylah*) These *tzaddikim* will point with their fingers, saying "this is the Lord our G'd forever".

In response to this, the onlookers will exclaim with awe not "who is the king of glory?" as in verse 8, but "who is this great heretofore invisible king of glory?" i.e. is this the king of glory whom we have failed to be aware of until now?

They will suddenly realize that G'd's glory is not like the glory of a human king who needs armies of soldiers in order to make an impression on those around him.

All this will occur after G'd has destroyed the gentile nations who have opposed Him, and only a small fraction of the Jewish people will remain on earth. It will then have become clear that G'd's glory does not depend on a large human population. The fact that He will be the only king at such a time is what the word *hoo*, in verse 10 is all about. There will no longer be other kings competing for glory, *kavod*. At that time, all will realize *selah* that G'd's kingdom will endure forever, that the temple will not again be destroyed.

Psalm 25

1. When a person sends a gift to someone greater than himself, the gift will be in keeping with the stature of both the sender and the recipient. Therefore, David says, "how can I display my regard for You?"

י מִי הוּא זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכָּבוֹד יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הוּא מֶלֶךְ הַכָּבוֹד סֶלָה:

כה

א לְדָוִד אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה נַפְשִׁי אֶשָּׂא:
ב אֱלֹהַי בְּךָ בָטַחְתִּי אַל-אֵבוֹשָׁה אַל-יַעַלְצוּ אוֹיְבַי לִי:
ג גַּם כָּל-קוֶיךָ לֹא יֵבֹשׁוּ יֵבֹשׁוּ הַבּוֹגְדִים רֵיקָם:

In Your Presence, I do not consider myself as king, but merely as "David", devoid of any titles.

On the other hand, You o G'd are so exalted that no one is of any stature in Your Presence. What possible gift can I offer You then which would reflect my true regard? Since my soul is my most precious possession, and since it is spiritual in nature as well as part of the Divine, it is my soul I present to You.

The introduction of *ledavid*, is equivalent to the Psalmist saying "since I am merely David, and since a gift fit for You does not exist, the only thing I can tender *essa*, is *nafshi*".

2. I am not afraid that if I tender it to You that You would be shamed in heaven by my deeds. Since I have always looked upon You as my G'd and put my trust in You, I need not feel ashamed. The only thing I am concerned about is that if I die now (if You accept my soul) my enemies will rejoice over my death and will sin towards You by so doing. Therefore, please accept my good intention as the deed itself.

Another meaning of verse 1 and 2 may be this. (Yuma 86)

David is aware that his sin, involving desecration of the name of G'd, cannot be TOTALLY atoned for until his death, i.e. *essa nafshi*, I will have to tender my life. However, at that time, due to the painful experience of dying *nafshi essa*, my soul will experience elevation. (through the atonement that comes with death)

Because I have always put my trust in You my G'd, I will not be shamed in the world to come, *al evosha*, but my enemies should not be able to rejoice over my death if it takes place now.

3. David hastens to add that he is not the only sinner who by reason of his trust in G'd hopes not to be shamed in the hereafter. Rather, *kol kovecha* all those who have displayed hope in You, but have sinned occasionally, should not be shamed either.

The ones however, who betrayed You *reykam*, for no good reason, can expect to be shamed for their conduct.

David blames his own downfall on his express desire to be tested

4Let me know Your paths, O LORD; teach me Your ways;
5guide me in Your true way and teach me, for You are God, my deliverer; it is You I look to at all times.
6O LORD, be mindful of Your compassion and Your faithfulness; they are old as time.
7Be not mindful of my youthful sins and transgressions; in keeping with Your faithfulness consider what is in my favor, as befits Your goodness, O LORD.

by G'd, so that Israel would mention his name daily in their prayers. (Sanhedrin 107)

4. I have admitted that I deserve to die, but do not shame me since I trusted in You. You Yourself have said that I caused myself to sin (see above). Therefore, and in order that such a thing cannot happen again, teach me Your ways. Had I known them, I would never have requested that Israel should refer to You as the G'd of David. (a reference to Psalms 26,1–2)

Had I realized that You do not need my prompting, that my request to be tested and found sound was a provocation in Your eyes, I never would have requested it. Especially so, after You had warned me that I would not be able to prove myself (compare Sanhedrin 107, the whole story) though You gave me advance notice of the test.

At that point I was already bound to fail in order that You could be proven right. *derachecha hashem* are Your broad ways, *hodi-eyni*, make known to me so I can walk on them. *orchotecha*, are the narrow paths. To be able to walk a narrow path, one needs more detailed guidance than merely to follow *derech*, i.e. a roadway. *limud* is intensive study, *hoda-ah*, information of a general character.

5. I do not only want to know which way to go when the choice before me is between right and wrong. Even if both ways are basically right, and I am in doubt about which one is the better one, teach me to walk that path.

I do not want to have to rely on myself; even after You have guided me. *lamdeyni* teach me how to keep on that path, so that I do not deviate to the right or to the left. Man is not capable to rely on himself without Divine guidance.

The reason is twofold. The first one is that You are the G'd of my salvation. Who else should I turn to for help? Why would You allow me to err? You would only have to cure me afterwards, i.e. set me straight after I had erred.

ד דְּרָכֶיךָ יְהוָה הוֹדִיעֵנִי אׇרְחוֹתֶיךָ לַמְּדֵנִי׃
ה הַדְרִיכֵנִי בַאֲמִתֶּךָ וְלַמְּדֵנִי כִּי־אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעִי
אוֹתְךָ קִוִּיתִי כָּל־הַיּוֹם׃
ו זְכֹר רַחֲמֶיךָ יְהוָה וַחֲסָדֶיךָ כִּי מֵעוֹלָם הֵמָּה׃
ז חַטֹּאות נְעוּרַי וּפְשָׁעַי אַל־תִּזְכֹּר כְּחַסְדְּךָ זְכָר־לִי־
אַתָּה לְמַעַן טוּבְךָ יְהוָה׃

Secondly, in You I have put my hope, *kiviti*, all day long (including the night). Since I have been granted *ruach hakodesh*, Divine inspiration at night, I anxiously wait all day for nightfall when Divine inspiration will come to me again. Why would You let me weaken by day, since You have demonstrated Your fondness of me by granting me the holy spirit at night?

6. Mercy is something applicable only in this "lower" world, i.e. *me-olam*; it does not apply in the celestial spheres, the world of angels, since the latter have no need of it, not having been equipped with a *yetzer hara* an evil urge.

Therefore, by asking *rachamecha*, Your mercy, we are asking for what has been specifically designed for man, i.e. for what is rightfully ours. Both *chessed* and *rachamim* had been co-opted by G'd when He created this world, to ensure that it could continue after the creative stages had come to an end. (Bereshit Rabbah 12,15) David applies the term *rachamim* to Hashem, the attribute of mercy, and the term *chessed* to the principle of *olam chessed yibaneh*, the world is founded on loving-kindness. (Psalms 89,3)

7. Why does David only mention *chatot* i.e. inadvertent sins and *pesha-im*, sins of a rebellious character, while ignoring *avonot* sins committed knowingly due to the lure of the *yetzer hara*, evil urge?

Why does he speak only about the sins of his youth that should not be remembered? What about the sins he committed when an adult?

Also, surely the relatively harmless *chata-im* of his youth can hardly be treated like the *pesha-im*?

We are told in Yuma 86 that according to Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, if someone does repentance out of fear of punishment, the sins he committed knowingly are upgraded and treated as if he had committed them unknowingly. If, however his repentance is due to a feeling of love for G'd, these sins are converted to merits. Not all knowingly committed sins are of equal severity, however. When a

[8]*Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He shows sinners the way.*
[9]*He guides the lowly in the right path, and teaches the lowly His way.*
[10]*All the LORD's paths are steadfast love for those who keep the decrees of His covenant.*
[11]*As befits Your name, O LORD, pardon my iniquity though it be great.*
[12]*Whoever fears the LORD, he shall be shown what path to choose.*

person commits a *pesha*, a sin designed to anger G'd, he needs to be grateful to G'd for treating it like an inadvertently committed act, or forgetting it. This is so even if his *teshuvah*, repentance stems from a feeling of love for G'd.

David speaks about the inadvertent sin of his youth as well as about the rebellious acts he committed i.e. the ones which had meanwhile been converted into inadvertently committed sins, *shige-got*. He asks NOW that they not be remembered at all, he does not even want them converted into merits. If G'd, in His kindness, will convert the *zedonot*, knowingly committed sins, into merits, he wants G'd to convert all of them into merits, but not because he believes himself entitled to this, but *zechor li attah* You remember them for me *lema-an tuvcha* for the sake of Your goodness.

8. The Talmud Baba Metzia 17 explains that the verse *ve-assita hayashar ve-hatov be-eyney hashem*, you shall do what is upright and good in the eyes of the Lord, (Deut. 6,18) means, that we are required to conduct ourselves in a manner which exceeds the requirements of the law. The *patach* tone sign under the letter *bet* in *baderech* in our verse here, instead of the customary *shevah* tone sign, i.e. *be-derech*, indicates the meaning of this line. Because G'd is good and *yashar*, more than merely just, He teaches even the sinners how to remain on the path of repentance once they have begun to tread it.

9. Should you ask that in that event what is the difference between a *baal teshuvah* a repentant sinner and someone who has remained pure all his life, and who has demonstrated his humility, a greater virtue even than merely being "G'd fearing"? The answer is that G'd will guide the humble *bamishpat*, first along the line of justice, subsequently along the lines of *chassidut* piety. (compare the progression mentioned in Shabbat 133). He will teach them to

ח טוֹב וְיָשָׁר יְהוָה עַל-כֵּן יוֹרֶה חַטָּאִים בַּדָּרֶךְ׃
ט יַדְרֵךְ עֲנָוִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט וִילַמֵּד עֲנָוִים דַּרְכּוֹ׃
י כָּל-אָרְחוֹת יְהוָה חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת לְנֹצְרֵי בְרִיתוֹ וְעֵדֹתָיו׃
יא לְמַעַן-שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה וְסָלַחְתָּ לַעֲוֹנִי כִּי רַב-הוּא׃
יב מִי זֶה הָאִישׁ יְרֵא יְהוָה יוֹרֶנּוּ בְּדֶרֶךְ יִבְחָר׃

emulate G'd's characteristics, such as being gracious, patient etc. He will teach the humble His way.

Just as G'd does not take offense easily, so the *anavim*, the humble should not take offense easily etc.

10. To the argument that all G'd's ways are *chessed*, loving-kindness, why focus on the aspect of teaching sinners who are on the way back to Him only? The Psalmist answers that this is true, but GENERALLY His loving-kindness is reserved only for the *notzrey brito* those who keep His covenant and testimonies. People who fail to keep His testimonies, seeing in them only a safeguard against transgressing negative commandments err, and do not qualify for *vi-yelamed darko*, He will teach them His way.

Another aspect of *yoreh chata-im* is, that NORMALLY when a sinner experiences G'd's generosity, he might conclude that his sins have NOT come to G'd's attention, and he will never be held accountable. G'd's kindness to repentant sinners is that He does not let them delude themselves in this manner.

Kol orchot hashem. Even when we see perfectly righteous people suffer, we must remember that ALL G'd's ways are *chessed ve-emet*, kindness and truth, even when they seem to hurt the *notzrey brito*, those who keep His covenant.

11. I do not belong to the group of sinners who view their sins as insignificant, says David, and who therefore do not achieve forgiveness. Because *rav hoo*, I am aware of the seriousness of my sins, I hope You will forgive for Your name's sake. (Your reputation of practicing pardon).

12. Some people acquire their entitlement to the hereafter by dint of Torah study; others by dint of practicing loving-kindness with their less fortunate brethren. Still others establish their claim to the hereafter by acts of charity. The common denominator is performance of G'd's commandments. David states that anyone who is motivated by reverence for G'd, will be assisted by Him in the path he has chosen to achieve his share in the hereafter.

13 *He shall live a happy life, and his children shall inherit the land.*
14 *The counsel of the LORD is for those who fear Him; to them He makes known His covenant.*
15 *My eyes are ever toward the LORD, for He will loose my feet from the net.*
16 *Turn to me, have mercy on me, for I am alone and afflicted.*
17 *My deep distress increases; deliver me from my straits.*

13. What is this "way of G'd" that the *yerey elokim* chooses? He wants his soul when it rests in the grave, i.e. *talin*, to experience the *tov*, the objectively good. He does NOT look for reward in THIS world. Even the "dividends" of his meritorious deeds, to which he is entitled in this life, he assigns to his descendants *ve-zaro yirash aretz*, so they can be assured of an inheritance on earth (compare our commentary chapter 17,14)

14. Apart from the insights the *yerey shamayim*, G'd fearing individual, acquires by his own efforts, walking the path of G'd, he also enjoys specific *sod hashem*, secret insights G'd grants him. This experience is similar to that experienced by prophets, – though unlike the prophets these insights are not for publication.

This does not only occur in isolated cases, one or two people per generation, but *u-verito lehodiam*, it is anchored in the very covenant with G'd that he will inform his *yereyim* of such secret knowledge. (compare Proverbs 2,5)

David says that the reason he only asked that his sins be wiped out, i.e. that the factors which damage his standing be removed is, because only a person who is free from sin is the kind of *yerey shamayim* who is truly reverent so that G'd shares those secrets with him. Anyone else is not entitled to make such a request.

15. My own eyes are trained on G'd all the time that He should extricate me from the net my feet are enmeshed in, i.e. from the sins which are the result of previously committed transgressions. (Avot 4,1) Once this request is granted, the rest follows naturally. It follows that my request for *selichah* forgiveness (verse 11) is *davar rav* a major matter, since it is the key to my entire spiritual progress, says David.

Some people think that if someone is too preoccupied with his spiritual development, and therefore has "his eyes in the clouds", – he will stumble on earth and find himself mired in sin without having

יג נַפְשׁוֹ בְּטוֹב תָּלִין וְזַרְעוֹ יִירַשׁ אָרֶץ׃
יד סוֹד יְהוָה לִירֵאָיו וּבְרִיתוֹ לְהוֹדִיעָם׃
טו עֵינַי תָּמִיד אֶל-יְהוָה כִּי הוּא יוֹצִיא מֵרֶשֶׁת רַגְלָי׃
טז פְּנֵה-אֵלַי וְחָנֵּנִי כִּי-יָחִיד וְעָנִי אָנִי׃
יז צָרוֹת לְבָבִי הִרְחִיבוּ מְמְצוּקוֹתַי הוֹצִיאֵנִי׃

intended to. David states categorically that this is not so. He who focuses on his spiritual development, i.e. whose *eyni tamid lashem*, will find that G'd in turn will extricate him from sin, i.e. *hoo yotzi mereshet raglay*, he will pull my feet from the net of the trapper.

16. Therefore turn to me and grant me grace (as written in Exodus 33,13) which the sages in Shemot Rabbah 45,6 describe as G'd's great treasure chamber, the contents of which are used to supply people lacking in merit.

The reason that David neither invokes the 13 attributes of G'd, nor what he perceives to be possible personal merit, is because he is a single individual, and only a quorum of 10 people can invoke the 13 attributes revealed to Moses in Exodus 34,6–7.

17. *tzarot*, are troubles, objectively speaking. *metzukot*, are troubles, subjectively speaking, i.e. the negative reaction to *tzarot*.

David knows that afflictions in their various forms are designed to cure character weaknesses in a person, i.e. they are to cure diseases of the spirit. They are EFFECTIVE as such only when the victim, i.e. the patient welcomes them as a form of therapy. When he does not, they are merely *metzukot*, forms of distress. David acknowledges that G'd sent afflictions, *tzarot*, have enlarged his heart, given him a better perspective because they caused his sins to be atoned. Hence, *mimetzukotay hotzieyni* these afflictions have removed my distress.

David may be saying that his *levav*, his dual heart, *hirchiv* has expanded, that his *yetzer hara* has become stronger. We have a tradition that the greater the man the greater the temptation he is exposed to. (Sukkah 52) It follows that once David's sins have been forgiven, he gains in stature. This in turn leads to a stronger *yetzer hara*, evil urge. He is therefore asking *hotzieyni*, remove from me *metzukotay*, my evil urge, i.e. the cause of my distress! He wants to remain *yachid* (verse 16) in which case he is confident of his ability to cope with the challenges facing him.

18 *Look at my affliction and suffering, and forgive all my sins.*
19 *See how numerous my enemies are, and how unjustly they hate me!*
20 *Protect me and save me; let me not be disappointed, for I have sought refuge in You.*
21 *May integrity and uprightness watch over me, for I look to You.*
22 *O God, redeem Israel from all its distress.*

26 *Of David.*
Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked without blame; I have trusted in the LORD; I have not faltered.

18. In Chronicles I 22,14 we read of David saying "in my poverty I have prepared for the house of the Lord one hundred thousand talents of gold and one million talents of silver etc. etc." Our sages ask how someone who could donate such huge sums could describe himself as "poor"? They answer that David deprived himself and his household, in order to save these sums for the building of the temple. (Berachot 5) If someone studies Torah although plagued by afflictions, his sins are pardoned, and he will enjoy a share in the hereafter. Seeing that David was a famous king, we might argue that he does not qualify under the above heading, that he could hardly be considered "afflicted"!

To this, David's responds *re-ay onyi*, by saying that he lived in poverty, denied himself the luxuries available to him as a king. When someone HAS the wherewithal, such as a king, and he foregoes it, he rates even higher than someone who studies Torah although he does not have the wherewithal. The Talmud in Moed Katan 16 relates that not only was David busy with Torah study despite the demands made on his time as king, but he sat on the floor while he studied Torah. (not on a cushion) This is why he hopes for his sins to be forgiven or rated less severe, i.e. *sa lechol chatatay*.

19. I have been burned by two fires, says David. 1) My enemies are numerous. 2) They hate me violently. Because the enemies are so numerous, one amongst them may be personally free from guilt, and I am afraid that in my anger I may strike out and hit just such a person, thus spilling innocent blood. On the other hand, their hatred is so violent that I may have to take defensive action.

יח רְאֵה-עָנְיִי וַעֲמָלִי וְשָׂא לְכָל-חַטֹּאתָי:
יט רְאֵה אֹיְבַי כִּי-רָבּוּ וְשִׂנְאַת חָמָס שְׂנֵאוּנִי:
כ שָׁמְרָה נַפְשִׁי וְהַצִּילֵנִי אַל-אֵבוֹשׁ כִּי-חָסִיתִי בָךְ:
כא גֹּם וָיֹשֶׁר יִצְּרוּנִי כִּי קִוִּיתִיךָ:
כב פְּדֵה-אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכֹּל צָרוֹתָיו:

כו א לְדָוִד שָׁפְטֵנִי יְהוָה כִּי-אֲנִי בְתֻמִּי הָלַכְתִּי וּבַיהוָה בָּטַחְתִּי לֹא אֶמְעָד:

20. Therefore, I ask that You protect me from killing an innocent party, and also *hatzileyni* that You save me from them. Should You say that You cannot save me seeing that they are free agents, I am asking "do not shame me for having relied on You".

21. Even if You normally do not save anyone from the hands of free willed men, this situation entails two elements. First, there is *taum veyosher*, my personal uprightness which fashions me. I have hopefully waited for You, *kiviticha*. However, I am only an individual *yachid* (as in verse 16), hence my appeal to Hashem, the attribute of mercy.

22. The second consideration is that the people of Israel are in need of Your redemption. Seeing that they are a congregation, they can count not only on the attribute of mercy, but even on the attribute of justice, i.e. *elokim* to save them from all their trouble.

(An alternate view of verses 19–22 relates them to what took place in Samuel II 5,24)

Psalm 26

1. Our sages in Sanhedrin 107 state that David asked G'd that Israel in their prayers should refer to Him as the G'd of David, just as we refer to Him as the G'd of the patriarchs in the daily *amidah* prayer. G'd answered David that the patriarchs had successfully passed a variety of tests, and this is why they had qualified for the distinction of G'd being called their G'd in our prayers. David however, had not undergone such tests.

Thereupon David asked G'd to subject him to a test also, i.e. verse 2 in our chapter. Our commentators understand this Psalm as having been composed AFTER the episode with Bat Sheva, which was the

[2]Probe me, O LORD, and try me, test my heart and mind;
[3]for my eyes are on Your steadfast love; I have set my course by it.
[4]I do not consort with scoundrels, or mix with hypocrites;
[5]I detest the company of evil men, and do not consort with the wicked;
[6]I wash my hands in innocence, and walk around Your altar,

test that David failed to pass. This is why the hymn commences with the words "For David, judge me merciful G'd, for I have walked in my integrity etc."

This would also be in line with the comment of Rabbi Yochanan in Avodah Zarah 5, that neither Israel at the golden calf episode, nor David when he had become infatuated with Bat Sheva had reached the moral low where such lapses could be expected of them; rather they had been allowed to sin in order to demonstrate the power of repentance to would be sinners, both collectively i.e. Israel, and individually i.e. David. (see our commentary on chapter 17,3)

We have stated there that the argument that had there not been a previous inadvertent sin, neither party would have forfeited the protection G'd offers the *tzaddik* against sinning, i.e. against his evil urge, is spurious. The Talmud insists that there had not been a previous lapse by David, hence he can point to having "I walked in my integrity", I trusted in the Lord without "wavering".

2. The "wavering" refers to the test David was subjected to. He says "I was fully prepared, i.e. *bechaneni* when He would test me."

The plain meaning of the Psalm, in contrast to the commentators, seems to be that David requests the test NOW. The words "I will not waver when G'd examines me", could hardly have been written after the event. If we follow the *peshat*, then the meaning of verse 1 is similar to the way we have explained Genesis 28,21. There, Jacob makes a vow in which he promises that if G'd would protect him etc. until he will safely return to his father's house, he would henceforth be willing to make his conduct subject to the rules of the attribute of justice, *elokim*, instead of claiming that he wants to be judged by the attribute of mercy. He would then address *hashem* here, i.e. the attribute of mercy, – inviting G'd to subject him to the attribute of justice by saying *shofteyni*, judge me! He is confident that his conduct *tumi*, enables him to pass such a test. The patriarchs

ג בְּחַנְתָּנִי יְהוָה וְנַסֵּנִי צָרְפָה כִלְיוֹתַי וְלִבִּי:
ד כִּי-חַסְדְּךָ לְנֶגֶד עֵינָי וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בַּאֲמִתֶּךָ:
ה לֹא-יָשַׁבְתִּי עִם-מְתֵי-שָׁוְא וְעִם נַעֲלָמִים לֹא אָבוֹא:
ו שָׂנֵאתִי קְהַל מְרֵעִים וְעִם-רְשָׁעִים לֹא אֵשֵׁב:
ז אֶרְחַץ בְּנָקִיּוֹן כַּפָּי וַאֲסֹבְבָה אֶת-מִזְבַּחֲךָ יְהוָה:

excelled over Noach, who had been described by G'd as *tamim*, perfect (see Rashi on Genesis 6,9) in that Noach needed G'd's assistance *et ha-elokim hithalech Noach*, Noach walked WITH G'd. Abraham did not, since it is written *hithalech lefanay*, walk BEFORE Me, (Genesis 17,1). When Jacob blessed his children (Genesis 48,15) he also refers to his father and grandfather as having walked BEFORE G'd.

David wants to include himself in that select group, saying I walked in my integrity i.e. unassisted.

3. David emphasizes that aware though he is of the fact that G'd founded the world on *chessed*, loving-kindness (Psalms 89,2), i.e. that G'd makes allowance for man's foibles, he neither relied on this nor does he want to take advantage of it. Rather, *hithalachti ba-amitecha*, I walked according to Your truth. (*midat hadin*, the attribute of justice)

4. David now addresses himself to the second cause for committing sins. Having said that he was certain that he would not waver, i.e. not give in to his evil urges, he asserts that association with vain people and dissemblers would not cause him to sin either. "I have never kept such company" says David, nor will I ever sit together with such people.

He says that he will be careful not to keep company with dissemblers, i.e. people whose piety begins from their lips outwards, whereas in their insides they are sinful.

5. If I do not sit with the *metey shav*, those who harm nobody though they help no one either, I hate the *kehal mereyim*, the gathering of evil doers, i.e. I will certainly not sit with those whose wickedness is vis a vis G'd, *resha-im*.

6. On the verse in Chronicles I 22,8, "you spilled a great deal of blood, you will not build a house for Me etc.", Yalkut Shimoni Samuel I item 133 says that David countered "did I do wrong by spilling the blood of pagans"? To this G'd replied "I used the word *lefanay* in the sense that the blood of the pagans you have spilled is like sacrificial blood on My altar". (i.e. a form of compliment to David)

7raising my voice in thanksgiving, and telling all Your wonders.
8O LORD, I Love Your temple abode, the dwelling-place of Your glory.
9Do not sweep me away with sinners, or [snuf out] my life with murderers,
10who have schemes at their fingertips, and hands full of bribes.
11But I walk without blame; redeem me, have mercy on me!

From the above, it is clear that David PERSONALLY killed and refers to this here. If someone were to say to him that he had not been found worthy of building the temple because he had shed much blood, and how could he dare compare himself to the patriarchs?, he would counter that he has washed his "bloody" hands in purity, *benikayon kappai.* Not only is this NOT a guilt, but G'd Himself has told me that He views this blood as an offering brought by me which He has welcomed. The *va-assovavah et mizbachacha hashem,* I wanted to walk around Your altar, is a reference to public offerings, (offerings on behalf of the public) which require the blood of the animals to be sprinkled on the 4 corners of the altar, the priest walking from corner to corner. (Zevachim 5,3) David views the pagan's blood as offerings to G'd.

7. Should someone ask him that if what he had done by killing pagans was indeed equivalent to offering sacrifices on the altar, why was he so intent on building the temple by himself? Why did he compare himself to the patriarchs who had NOT professed the need to build a temple to G'd? After all, they themselves had been the carriers of the Divine entourage, *merkavah*? (compare Bereshit Rabbah 82,6)

People who think in those terms assume that the pagans David killed represented sin offerings by David, and that this is the reason he is anxious to offer such sin offerings in Jerusalem opposite the site of the celestial sanctuary.

David answers that this is not so. There are two reasons why he is anxious to build a temple. 1) To offer thanksgiving offerings for all the goodness he has experienced at the hands of G'd. 2) To proclaim G'd's mighty deeds there, in the presence of the assembly of Israel, i.e. *lashmi-a bekol todah-le-sapper kol nifle-otecha.*

8. This is the reason I love the abode of Your house and the site

ז לַשְׁמֵעַ בְּקוֹל תּוֹדָה וּלְסַפֵּר כָּל-נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ׃
ח יְהוָה אָהַבְתִּי מְעוֹן בֵּיתֶךָ וּמְקוֹם מִשְׁכַּן כְּבוֹדֶךָ׃
ט אַל-תֹּאסֵף עִם-חַטָּאִים נַפְשִׁי וְעִם-אַנְשֵׁי דָמִים חַיָּי׃
י אֲשֶׁר-בִּידֵיהֶם זִמָּה וִימִינָם מָלְאָה שֹׁחַד׃
יא וַאֲנִי בְתֻמִּי אֵלֵךְ פְּדֵנִי וְחָנֵּנִי׃

of the residence of Your glory. (and not in order to offer sin offerings to achieve atonement.)

The reason David repeats *me-on beytecha* and *mishkan kevodecha*, is to show his awareness that it is hardly seemly to view G'd as having a physical residence on earth. (compare Kings I 8,27)

However, just as in Exodus 32,21, on which Shemot Rabbah explains that *makom* is His, not that He belongs to *makom*, and in accordance with Bereshit Rabbah 88,9 on Deuteronomy 33,27, "the Eternal is a dwelling place" that He is the site of the universe, David makes the same point here.

He says "You are the residence of *mikdash*, i.e. the temple is at home with You, You are not at home in the temple. The temple itself is an extension of Yourself, – called *kavod*, glory.

9. The Talmud Berachot 10 relates that Rabbi Meir prayed that the people who persecuted him (gentiles) should die, basing himself on Psalms 104,25 *yitamu chata-im min ha-aretz*, let the sinners perish from the earth. His wife Beruriah remonstrated with him, saying that the word *chata-im* did not refer to the people but to the sinful actions they had committed. Sins should cease to be. (as a result there would be no sinners) The Talmud appears to accept Beruriah's interpretation. The reason the word *chata-im* is masculine, not *chata-ot* (feminine) as usual when it means sins, would be that since each sin becomes an accuser, (as we explained in chapter 5 verse 5), what David is saying is that he does not want to meet up with these accusers when he dies. He wants those accusers to have been disposed of prior to his physical death. He does not want to die till his penitence has been completed.

10. Concerning sinners with whom at one time or another I associated, and whose ways I might have copied having associated with them, I could be guilty for not having protested their acts of immorality and bribery loudly enough.

11. I walked in my integrity, observing but remaining silent; for this I need atonement. Hence I ask *pedeni vechoneyni*, redeem me and show me favour.

12*My feet are on level ground.*
In assemblies I will bless the LORD.

27 *Of David.*
The LORD is my light and my help; whom should I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life, whom shoud I dread?
2*When evil men assail me to devour my flesh it is they, my foes and my enemies, who stumble and fall.*

12. I do NOT need to atone for having copied their evil ways. My foot stood *bemishor*, in an even place, a place where G'd protects his *tzaddikim* from sinning.

Therefore, in the future when G'd prepares a feast for the righteous, at which time 2 choirs will sing to Him, i.e. the angels and the souls of the righteous, I will be able to bless the Lord, i.e. recite the grace as representative of the righteous. (Pessachim 119)

Psalm 27

1. It is known from Sanhedrin 107, that man=Adam is the soul, not a description of the flesh, the outer shell of the human being. The flesh is called *besar adam*, human flesh only in order to distinguish it from the *ruach*, the spirit, another part of the human being. When David speaks about the soul, he describes it as *ori yishi*, my light and my salvation; whereas when he speaks about the body, he says "to consume my flesh".

David is still under the spell of his sin with Bat Sheva, which continues to cause conflict with his enemies.

They are the ones who bitingly ask him what the penalty for adultery is (Sanhedrin 107). They anger him in his lecture hall. We also know that prior to the episode with Bat Sheva, David had asked permission to build a temple. (Samuel II chapter 7) This request had not been granted.

We need to remember that a person faces 2 categories of enemies. One is the enemy of the soul, i.e. the evil urge, and all the forces of impurity created by one's own sins. Each sin results in an additional soldier in the camp of his enemies, seeking the destruction of his soul.

יב רַגְלִי עָמְדָה בְּמִישׁוֹר בְּמַקְהֲלִים אֲבָרֵךְ יְהוָה׃

כז א לְדָוִד יְהוָה אוֹרִי וְיִשְׁעִי מִמִּי אִירָא יְהוָה מָעוֹז חַיַּי
מִמִּי אֶפְחָד׃
ב בְּקָרֹב עָלַי מְרֵעִים לֶאֱכָל אֶת-בְּשָׂרִי צָרַי וְאוֹיְבַי לִי
הֵמָּה כָּשְׁלוּ וְנָפָלוּ׃

The second category of enemy a person faces is the enemy which attacks his body, who wants to kill him in battle.

David suffered from a third category of enemy, people in his environment such as Doag and Achitofel and their kind, who publicly put him to shame and caused him to become angry.

Concerning the first group of enemies, David says that he is not particularly concerned. Since G'd had been with him, he feared neither for his soul becoming corrupted nor that his body would fall victim to his enemies.

Concerning the third category of enemies, David laments that his request to build a temple had not been granted, since this made it impossible for him to spend his life beholding the glory of G'd and to seek deeper understanding (as per verse 4). Had his request been granted, – his enemies would have been deflated, seeing that G'd had chosen him, David, to build the temple. What greater proof could there have been of their enmity towards him being ill founded? As it is, David is concerned lest in a fit of anger he will revenge himself on this third group of enemies, only to find that G'd disapproves.

Now to a more detailed analysis of the text. *Ledavid hashem*, means, that "since G'd is on my side, how can I be afraid, who can lead me into sin?" This refers to his *nefesh* soul.

Since G'd is *ma-oz chayai*, the strength of my life, i.e. protects my body, from whom should I be afraid?

2. Should one reply that he has reason to fear any human adversary since G'd does not interfere with man's free will, David answers that such concern is not relevant. At worst, such adversaries can "consume my flesh".

Concerning the *me-reyim* that aim at my soul, says David, *li heymah*, they are my very own, i.e. *sheli*. Since they are the creations resulting from my own sins, my repentance out of love for G'd will make them fail and stumble, since they will be converted into merits for me. (Yuma 86) My erstwhile accusers will become my advocates.

3Should an army besiege me, my heart would have no fear; should war beset me, still would I be confident.
4One thing I ask of the LORD, only that do I seek: to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD, to frequent His temple.
5He will shelter me in His pavilion on an evil day, grant me the protection of His tent, raise me high upon a rock.
6Now is my head high over my enemies roundabout; I sacrifice in His tent with shouts of joy, singing and chanting a hymn to the LORD.
7Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; have mercy on me, answer me.

The only time G'd does not interfere with a person's free choice is when his opponent is not free from sin. When the prospective victim is free from sin, he will be saved like Chananyah Mishael and Azaryah whom Nebuchadnezzar threw into a fiery furnace. (Daniel chapter 3) Also in that instance G'd allowed Nebuchadnezzar to carry out his design; He only frustrated the outcome by saving his victims miraculously. Nebuchadnezzar could thus become guilty of a freely performed act, without the act having achieved its aim.

David saying *heymah* after *oyvay li*, emphasizes that this refers to the *me-reyim*. He need not worry about their designs being crowned with success although the perpetrators will stumble and fall.

3. I have a clear indication that I will be saved, since I experience no fear in my heart even when surrounded by the enemy. The Talmud Berachot 60, relates that a certain student walked behind Rabbi Yishmael in the streets of Zion. The Rabbi noticed that the student appeared afraid. He confronted him saying "you must have committed a sin", quoting scripture (Isaiah 33,14) "only sinners are afraid in Zion". The student countered that fear is a virtue since Solomon says in Proverbs 28,14, "hail the person who is constantly afraid". Rabbi Yishmael replied that Solomon's saying referred only to the fear of forgetting one's Torah learning.

At any rate, David, feeling no fear, is confident that his sins have not jeopardized G'd's protection. Similarly, we find that Jacob when experiencing fear of Esau, worried that he might have forfeited G'd's promises due to having committed some sin. (Berachot 4)

4. Still, David repeats his request to be allowed to separate from the demands of civilization and withdraw to the serenity of the temple precincts. (According to tradition, Yuma 25, only kings of

ג אִם-תַּחֲנֶה עָלַי מַחֲנֶה לֹא יִירָא לִבִּי אִם-תָּקוּם עָלַי
מִלְחָמָה בְּזֹאת אֲנִי בוֹטֵחַ:
ד אַחַת שָׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת-יְהוָה אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ שִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית
-יְהוָה כָּל-יְמֵי חַיַּי לַחֲזוֹת בְּנֹעַם-יְהוָה וּלְבַקֵּר
בְּהֵיכָלוֹ:
ה כִּי יִצְפְּנֵנִי בְסֻכֹּה בְּיוֹם רָעָה יַסְתִּירֵנִי בְּסֵתֶר אָהֳלוֹ
בְּצוּר יְרוֹמְמֵנִי:
ו וְעַתָּה יָרוּם רֹאשִׁי עַל-אֹיְבַי סְבִיבוֹתַי וְאֶזְבְּחָה בְאָהֳלוֹ
זִבְחֵי תְרוּעָה אָשִׁירָה וַאֲזַמְּרָה לַיהוָה:
ז שְׁמַע יְהוָה קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא וְחָנֵּנִי וַעֲנֵנִי:

Davidic descent are allowed to sit down in the courtyard of the temple. David alludes to this by saying *shivti be-veyt hashem.*)

This is the reason I could stay there indefinitely, not like other kings including Saul, who, since they have to remain there in a standing position, could not remain there indefinitely. *lachazot be-noam hashem*, David yearns for the inspiration available in the house of G'd, which will also benefit the body when he visits the sanctuary daily. *levaker*, from the word *boker* morning. David alludes to daily visits in the morning.

5. I am not asking for this so that my soul will gain entry into the hereafter when I die. I am quite certain that He shields me from all problems *beyom ra*, on the day I die, that He will do good with me also after death. (i.e. *David melech yisrael chay vekayam*)

6. The only reason I am asking to bask in G'd's glory in the temple NOW is so that Doag and Achitofel will have to acknowledge NOW that since the temple has been built by me, I must be worthy in the eyes of G'd. As it is, they would acknowledge this only after our respective deaths. Please G'd, do not suspect me of trying to show off my piety when compared to others, or that I want to assert myself over them.

On the contrary, when the temple will be built, I will offer *zivchey teruah*, offerings declaring my humility, *ashirah va-azamrah* my song of jubilation will be motivated by the fact that Your desire to have a residence in our spheres has finally been realized. (compare Tanchumah Nasso 16.) At that point, desecration of Your holy name will cease to occur.

7. Until now, I had requested that the temple be built in my time,

8In Your behalf my heart says: "Seek My face!"
O LORD, I seek Your face.
9Do not hide Your face from me; do not thrust aside
Your servant in anger; You have ever been my help.
Do not forsake me, do not abandon me, O God, my deliverer.
10Though my father and mother abandon me, the LORD will take me in.
11Show me Your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my watchful foes.

and that I would have peace from quarrelling with those who desecrate Your name now, says David. Seeing, however, that my request has not been granted, I ask for a different route to be followed. Basically, I appeal to You G'd not to hide Your face from me. The meaning of the verse is ***shema***, listen, – afterwards I will pray, ***ekra***. Just as G'd promised in Isaiah 65,24 "before THEY will call, I will respond", so David requests that kind of grace for himself as an INDIVIDUAL, since the prophet had promised this only as a response to a community which is about to verbalize its prayers.

Alternately, – in a more humble fashion – David says "though it is Your way to respond PRIOR to the request, this is only to those who deserve it. I, David, will be satisfied if You answer me AFTER I shall call out.

8. Before David explains that his request is "do not hide Your face from me" (in verse 9), David explains that the ordinary individual feels that as long as his heart is trained on G'd sincerely, i.e. ***lecha libbi***, there is NO need for focusing all one's talents on G'd, in order for Him to grant assistance. David explains that this is not so, that ***bakshu panay et panecha***, he needs in addition that G'd's face be turned towards him. Therefore,

9. "do not hide Your face from me at any time, do not even turn away from me when I am angry against my enemies who are around me." For if You would turn away from me, I might pursue them, kill them and perchance kill a person who is not guilty of death. This would then be a sin against G'd.

I am afraid that ***hatayah*** temporary turning away, could lead to ***netishah***, to longer lasting abandonment of me by You, and could turn eventually into ***azivah***, that You forsake me totally.

The reason I am worried, says David, is because ***ezrati hayitah***, I called on Your attribute of mercy so many times, and You used to be my total support, that I am worried NOW that You might henceforth

ח לְךָ אָמַר לִבִּי בַּקְּשׁוּ פָנָי אֶת-פָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֲבַקֵּשׁ:
ט אַל תַּסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי אַל-תַּט בְּאַף עַבְדֶּךָ עֶזְרָתִי
הָיִיתָ אַל-תִּטְּשֵׁנִי וְאַל תַּעַזְבֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעִי:
י כִּי-אָבִי וְאִמִּי עֲזָבוּנִי וַיהוָה יַאַסְפֵנִי:
יא הוֹרֵנִי יְהוָה דַּרְכֶּךָ וּנְחֵנִי בְּאֹרַח מִישׁוֹר לְמַעַן
שׁוֹרְרָי:

employ the *midat hadin*, attribute of justice, and I would not qualify for this. *ta-azveyni*, You might forsake me permanently.

10. Not only now, but already since David's infancy. Man has 3 partners which between them produce him. His parents and G'd. Parents provide the body, G'd the soul. (Kiddushin 30) Since David was meant to be still born, (compare our commentary chapter 2 verse 7) his parents, i.e. those who supplied the body, had already abandoned him at birth. Who was left except G'd? Only He had supplied some years from Adam and the patriarchs as explained in chapter 2.

11. So far, David had asked for G'd's "face" to be with him. (verse 8) Afterwards he had asked not to be abandoned by G'd's face even temporarily. Now he adds a third request. Seeing that he had sinned on his first appearance in this world as Adam, You G'd have done me a great favour by assembling for me another 70 years of life on this earth, by giving me some years from Adam and some from the patriarchs, i.e. *ya-asfeyni*.

My father and mother, i.e. those ancestors whose years were bequeathed to me *azavuni*, have abandoned me. They are no longer, they cannot advise me. Therefore, I ask guidance from You. My objective is to pay back good for evil, just as You have given me (Adam) a second chance at rehabilitating myself.

orach mishor is the path of the *yashar*, something beyond the requirements of the law, of strict justice. Those who act in accordance with such principles are called *yesharim*. They can see the face of G'd (Midrash Tehillim 11) more than any other category of *tzaddikim*. *orach* is more a narrow path, as opposed to *derech*. David wants guidance not only on *derachecha*, Your highways, but also on the narrower path reserved for the *yesharim*.

To deal kindly with my adversaries when I am *baderech* i.e. not hemmed in, is relatively easy. But I want guidance to maintain these standards even *be-orach mishor*, on the narrow path, when I feel hemmed in on both sides.

12*Do not subject me to the will of my foes, for false*
witnesses and unjust accusers have appeared against me.
13*Had I not the assurance that I would enjoy the*
goodness of the LORD in the land of the living...
14*Look to the LORD; be strong and of good courage!*
O look to the LORD!

28 *Of David.*
O LORD, I call to You; my rock, do not disregard me, for if You hold aloof from me, I shall be like those gone down into the Pit.

I want my adversaries to recognize my pure motives; I do not want them to think that my kindness to them is flattery with an ulterior motive, or that my piety is only for display.

12. We have a tradition that in order to save a generation, G'd may take the life of its leader to atone for the rest of his contemporaries, and thereby galvanize the survivors into doing *teshuvah*, repentance. (Ketuvot 8)

David asks that although he treats his adversaries kindly, he does not want to become their scapegoat, i.e. *al titneyni benefesh tzoray*, do not take my life instead of that of my oppressors.

The reason David prays in this fashion is, that he is convinced they will not view his death as the death of a *tzaddik* who would inspire the survivors into penitence, but that they would see in his death the death of a sinner. The reason he is sure of this, says David, is because their accusation against him as an adulterer was deliberately false testimony, *eydey sheker*.

Everyone knew that David's troops had issued divorce decrees to their wives before going into battle. (Shabbat 56) No one else but he had been accused of adultery by them. (Erchin 16) *kamu bi* they remain adamant against me, since according to Shabbat 97, vicious gossip would result in a person being smitten with *tzoraat* etc. and this has not happened to them, my death would be misinterpreted as confirmation that their accusation had been fair.

13. When I answered their accusation by saying that at least my sin would not jeopardise my hereafter, this had been to save them from having been guilty of vicious gossip and the sin of suspecting the innocent. This is why they have not been smitten with the penalties appropriate for such sins. (Shabbat 97, Erchin 16) This is the reason my death would be misinterpreted.

יג אַל-תִּתְּנֵנִי בְּנֶפֶשׁ צָרָי כִּי קָמוּ-בִי עֵדֵי-שֶׁקֶר וְיִפַּח חָמָס:
יג לוּלֵא הֶאֱמַנְתִּי לִרְאוֹת בְּטוּב-יְהוָה בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים:
יד קַוֵּה אֶל-יְהוָה חֲזַק וְיַאֲמֵץ לִבֶּךָ וְקַוֵּה אֶל-יְהוָה:

כח א לְדָוִד אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אֶקְרָא צוּרִי אַל-תֶּחֱרַשׁ מִמֶּנִּי פֶּן תֶּחֱשֶׁה מִמֶּנִּי וְנִמְשַׁלְתִּי עִם-יוֹרְדֵי בוֹר:

14. We have explained that David made 3 requests, one after another. First he asked that G'd should turn to him. Next he asked that G'd should not turn away from him even temporarily. Lastly, he asked continuous guidance from G'd in the ways of piety.

Concerning all these requests, the holy spirit responds. In response to his first request he is told ***kaveh el hashem***, hope that G'd will be with you. (all along the way, more than you asked).

Concerning his second request, i.e. that G'd should not turn away from him even temporarily, the holy spirit replies that David should not leave everything to G'd. Make a supreme effort yourself. If you do that, He will lend you strength not to become uncontrollably angry.

Concerning the third request, to be taught piety, the holy spirit again assures him ***kaveh el hashem***, i.e. G'd will grant that request also.

Psalm 28

1. David, while preparing to call upon G'd, says to Him ***al techerash***, do not be deaf like. We have explained Isaiah 65,24, "before they call I will answer", to mean that G'd responds to a prayer not yet verbalized. In that instance the prayer may never be verbalized. However, in Psalms 21,3 "You have granted the desire of his heart, and not denied the request of his lips", the situation is slightly different.

Even though G'd listens to an as yet unspoken prayer, – He allows the supplicant to verbalize his pleas and He takes time to listen to it, although there is no longer the need for it. In the situation described in Psalms 21,3, G'd is even more forthcoming than in the situation described in Isaiah.

David makes a similar distinction here. "I will call on you ***tzuri***", I

[2]Listen to my plea for mercy when I cry out to You,
when I lift my hands toward Your inner sanctuary.
[3]Do not count me with the wicked and evildoers who
profess goodwill toward their fellows while malice is in
their heart.
[4]Pay them according to their deeds, their malicious acts;
according to their handiwork pay them, give them their
deserts.
[5]For they do not consider the LORD's deeds, the work of
His hands.
May He tear them down, never to rebuild them!
[6]Blessed is the LORD, for He listens to my plea for
mercy.

have only managed to say *tzuri*, the introduction to my prayer; he adds "do not act deaf", i.e. do not wait until I verbalize the remainder of my prayer before You answer. If I do not receive a sign that You respond positively, I will lose my confidence and despair. Since this would be sinful, it may lead to Your remaining silent towards my prayer altogether. I would then be likened by my enemies to the *yordey bor*, as they would say that my previous sins have entrapped me. In turn THEY would sin against G'd by suspecting me unjustly.

2. After You have responded to me before I called, do not refuse to listen to my entreaty subsequently, but *shema kol tachanunay*, listen to the sound of my pleas.

David speaks about *kol tachanunay*, the sound of my entreaties at the time I implore you, i.e. from a sense of need. Do not weigh my worthiness or otherwise at the time I verbalize my prayers and raise my hands towards the residence of Your holiness. Do not examine if both my hands and my mouth are totally pure.

3. If for some reason You do not respond to my prayer, do not let me be drawn towards the wicked and the perpetrators of violence who speak peace while planning evil. The reason I might be drawn towards them would be that though my lips reflect what my heart thinks, and my hands are clean, You have not responded.

David divides sinners into 3 categories. *Resha-im* are the ones who violate the laws between man and G'd. *Po-aley aven* are those who violate laws between man and man. *Dovrey shalom* etc. "are those who are hypocrites, who appear pious while being evil in their hearts.

4. "Give them", i.e. punish them in a manner fit for their crimes, so

ב שְׁמַע קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנַי בְּשַׁוְּעִי אֵלֶיךָ בְּנָשְׂאִי יָדַי אֶל-
דְּבִיר קָדְשֶׁךָ:
ג אַל-תִּמְשְׁכֵנִי עִם-רְשָׁעִים וְעִם פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן דֹּבְרֵי שָׁלוֹם
עִם-רֵעֵיהֶם וְרָעָה בִּלְבָבָם:
ד תֵּן-לָהֶם כְּפָעָלָם וּכְרֹעַ מַעַלְלֵיהֶם כְּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם תֵּן
לָהֶם הָשֵׁב גְּמוּלָם לָהֶם:
ה כִּי לֹא יָבִינוּ אֶל-פְּעֻלֹּת יְהוָה וְאֶל-מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו
יֶהֶרְסֵם וְלֹא יִבְנֵם:
ו בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה כִּי-שָׁמַע קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנָי:

that everyone can realize why they are being punished thus. The reason David repeats *hashev gemulam lahem* is, that those whose crime is hypocrisy are not easily punished in a way which reflects their duplicity, since people are unaware of what had gone on within the hearts of those people. They therefore need to have their punishment augmented in purgatory after death before it could atone for them.

5. The reason I am asking all this, is because the people at large do not realize that the well being of the wicked in this life is only in order that they receive their reward for their good deeds now, and G'd does not have to re-surrect them to pay them the balance of their reward. (Kiddushin 39, Bereshit Rabbah 33,1)

Alternatively, in verse 3 David says "although I know You will not let me be drawn together with the wicked etc., the reason I ask for them to be punished, i.e. *midah keneged midah*, is so that the people DO NOT think that these wicked people are really *tzaddikim*".

David is concerned that G'd's proverbial patience with the sinners, as expressed in Genesis 15,16 "that the sins of the Emorites are not complete till the 4th generation", does not only confirm them in their evil ways, but breeds lack of faith in G'd as a judge in all those who observe the strange phenomenon of the success of the wicked.

6. David now blesses G'd for having not only responded to his call before he had expressed it, but for having given him the privilege to express his prayer though G'd had already been in the process of answering it. (compare verse 2).

7The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him.
I was helped, and my heart exulted, so I will glorify Him with my song.
8The LORD is their strength; He is a stronghold for the deliverance of His anointed.
9Deliver and bless Your very own people; tend them and sustain them forever.

29 *A psalm of David.*
Ascribe to the LORD, O divine beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

7. The reason that I KNOW that You have been my strength and shield, and I have been helped by You long before I prayed, is, that *vayaaloz libbi*, my heart rejoiced greatly. Had it not been so, my heart would have trembled. Therefore, I thank Him not only for His actions, but also for having heard my entreaties. I will also thank Him for having inspired my songs, i.e. for the *ruach hakodesh*, holy spirit, which I have been granted.

8. Once the people observe what is happening to the wicked, they will pray to G'd and repent, i.e. *Hashem oz lamo* i.e. then He will become the source of their strength and they will live; as a result of their peace their anointed king will be able to feel secure in the fortress of salvations.

9. David hastens to add that all of this is not intended for his personal benefit. It is not that HE wants to have that glory and be the Messiah. Rather, *hoshi-ah et amecha*, "You grant salvation to Your people", i.e. directly, without the use of an intermediary such as myself. "Bless Your inheritance", i.e. the elite. May they be the beneficiaries of all this, You elevate them, for ever more. Whatever I do, I do because they are Your chosen people, not because I crave the popularity. *ur-em*, – be shepherd to the people at large and elevate them both spiritually, i.e. save them from their evil urge. If You do all this directly, they will benefit much more, because they will be elevated to such a high niveau.

Psalm 29

1. In order to understand this hymn, it is mandatory to refer to our commentary on Psalms 89,7, in which we explained numerous advantages that the Jewish people enjoy vis a vis the angels.

ז יְהוָה עֻזִּי וּמָגִנִּי בוֹ בָטַח לִבִּי וְנֶעֱזָרְתִּי וַיַּעֲלֹז לִבִּי
וּמִשִּׁירִי אֲהוֹדֶנּוּ׃
ח יְהוָה עֹז לָמוֹ וּמָעוֹז יְשׁוּעוֹת מְשִׁיחוֹ הוּא׃
ט הוֹשִׁיעָה אֶת-עַמֶּךָ וּבָרֵךְ אֶת נַחֲלָתֶךָ וּרְעֵם וְנַשְּׂאֵם
עַד-הָעוֹלָם׃

כט א מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד הָבוּ לַיהוָה בְּנֵי אֵלִים הָבוּ לַיהוָה כָּבוֹד
וָעֹז׃

We stated there that "though no one in the heaven, i.e. *shachak* can be compared to the Lord, there are *beney elim*, i.e. Israelites who are called such because they are the descendants of the patriarchs, who could be compared to the Lord in some ways. (Midrash Tehillim, and Yalkut Shimoni item 709).

The Zohar on Jeremiah 10,7 says something along these lines. The prophet states "amongst all the wise men of the nations, there is none like You." To the question whether the prophet means that amongst the wise men of Israel there are some that are like Him, they answer that none of the wise men of the gentiles can make decrees which are binding upon G'd, which the Lord feels impelled to honour. Amongst the Jews, however, there are people whose decrees G'd feels bound to honour. An example would be Joshua's commanding the sun and moon to stop orbiting. (Joshua 10,12)

We can understand the line in Psalms 89,7 in a similar vein then, namely that angels do not initiate i.e. *ya-aroch* a plan of action, whereas man can do so, even to the extent of causing G'd to change the laws of nature.

Another advantage Israel possesses over the angels is this. When the ministering angels perform their tasks at the celestial court, they do not thereby enhance the power of G'd. Not so when the *tzaddikim* perform G'd's will.

We read in Job 22,28 "you decree, and He makes it stand up for you", i.e. He carries out your instructions. By inviting the onlookers to witness a miracle about to be performed, the prophet or the person praying for the miracle enhances the power of G'd in the eyes of the beholders of such feat. See Micha 3,8 *ve-ulam anochi mileyti koach et ruach hashem*, "and yet I have re-inforced the power of the spirit of the Lord".

2Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name; bow down to the LORD, majestic in holiness.
3The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over the mighty waters.

In this manner ***havu lashem kavod***, you are asked to contribute additional glory and power to G'd. Also, angels either act as destructive forces or as saviours. (Bereshit Rabbah 50,2) They cannot perform both tasks. Humans, – i.e. those so qualified, are able to do both.

David prefaces this Psalm by appealing to the Jewish people to act in such a way that the two temples which will be built and destroyed BEFORE the third temple will arise, can be skipped, and the temple to be built can be the first and ultimate temple combined.

In greater detail, his argument runs approximately thus. When Abraham, after the binding of Isaac called the site ***behar hashem ye-raeh***, (Genesis 22,14) on the mountain of G'd He will be seen, he had the vision that the temple would be built and destroyed before an enduring temple would arise. (compare Bereshit Rabbah 56,10)

The three pilgrimages annually to Jerusalem are symbolic of this also. Solomon built structures under his temple, in order that such artifacts as the holy ark could be hidden there by Josiah, prior to the temple's destruction. (Chronicles II 35,3)

Had the sin of the golden calf – which reintroduced the pollutants Israel had divested itself of prior to the revelation at Mount Sinai not interfered – only one temple would have been built, and it would have been the ultimate one. All spirit of impurity would have departed from earth in that event.

Even as late as in the time of David, the chance existed for Israel to conduct itself on a nationwide basis in such a way that it would contribute ***kavod*** and ***oz***, glory and power to G'd, as a result of which the first, second and third temple could all have been rolled into one.

In David's time, sufficient prerequisites existed to make such a possibility become a reality.

When the people do ***teshuvah***, repent, this is equivalent to giving ***kavod***, glory to G'd. (compare Joshua 7, 19, when Achan's confession is equated with ***kavod***, glory for G'd.) Compare also Jeremiah 13,16.

Oz are the good deeds performed by man, as we see from Michah 3,8 and Talmud Berachot 5, where our good deeds are described as giving additional power to G'd. This is the very reverse of the effect of our evil actions (see Deuteronomy 32,18)

David pleads with Israel to exploit its opportunity and to make it

ב הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ הִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לַיהוָה בְּהַדְרַת-
קֹדֶשׁ:
ג קוֹל יְהוָה עַל-הַמָּיִם אֵל-הַכָּבוֹד הִרְעִים יְהוָה עַל-
מַיִם רַבִּים:

possible that the temple which will be built soon will be the enduring one.

2. The 4 lettered name of G'd which will be restored to its glory once Amalek has been finally disposed of, is called *kavod Hashem*. (Exodus 40,34, and 35 as well as Isaiah 6,3). SInce that part of G'd's Presence is presently (during our exile) in self imposed exile, David asks for us to enable the *Shechinah* to come out of exile through our *teshuvah*, penitence. By doing so, "you will be able to prostrate yourself before Him in the beauty of holiness" i.e. in the rebuilt temple.

At this stage, – even if you prostrate yourselves in the temple, it is only a building made of stone, the *Shechinah* is hidden from your eyes. In the eventual temple, a predominantly spiritual structure, it will be different. The sanctity will not be concealed from the beholder. David exhorts the people not to forego this inspirational experience by delaying their *teshuvah* and *ma-assim tovim*, repentance and good deeds.

3. Since the impression that the 4 lettered name of G'd represents only the attribute of mercy is widespread, David points out that it too contains elements of *din*, justice, i.e. *oz*. Therefore the word *hir-im*, He thundered. This was demonstrated when the 4 lettered name of G'd split the sea and drowned the Egyptians. (Exodus chapter 14) Should you reason that since Israel described G'd at that time as *gibor milchamah* a great warrior, i.e. a name for the *midat hadin*, the attribute of justice, the answer is that this was not so.

Yalkut Shimoni on Parshat Yitro item 286, explains that the reason G'd describes Himself both as *Hashem* and *elokecha* at the beginning of the decalogue is, that G'd did not want the gentiles to be able to say that there are two domains shared by two different deities.

He made it plain therefore, that the SAME attribute of G'd that had sweetened the waters at Marah (Exodus 15,23–26) was also at work when the Egyptians drowned. (Exodus chapter 14)

G'd may have wanted to drive home this lesson by appearing silent when He drowned the Egyptians, – to show the element of *kavod*; whereas He appeared in thunder and lightning when granting the revelation and giving the Torah to His people, – to show that there was an element of *din*, justice in that also. In both instances –

4The voice of the LORD is power;
5the voice of the LORD is majesty; the voice of the LORD breaks cedars; the LORD shatters the cedars of Lebanon.
6He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, Sirion, like a yong wild ox.
7The voice of the LORD kindles flames of fire;
8the voice of the LORD convulses the wilderness; the LORD convulses the wilderness of Kadesh;

both the attribute of mercy and the attribute of justice respectively, were involved.

Just as a cantor wears different garments, depending on the nature of the task he has to perform, so G'd's manifestations vary with the task He is engaged in at the time.

4. Both at the sea and at Sinai, *Kol Hashem*, it was the voice of the 4 lettered name of G'd which accomplished all this.

Another reason for the conduct of G'd, was to point out the difference between human kings and the king of kings. A human king, when going into battle surrounds himself with a noisy army, all manner of fear inspiring instruments. When such a king goes to pray however, he prefers solitude. G'd does the opposite. When G'd smote the Egyptians at the sea, He came alone, unassisted by angels, *ish milchamah*, without entourage. At the revelation at Mount Sinai however, He had surrounded Himself with myriads of angels. *berivevot kodesh.* (Deut. 33,2) All of this was designed to demonstrate that both attributes are really only different sides of the same coin, i.e. the same G'd.

5. Since we have a tradition (Berachot 48) based on Daniel 2 and Nebuchadnezzar's dream, that G'd cannot shatter the rule of the various kingdoms prior to His predetermined timetable, one might think that G'd has no recourse but to wait till certain events have run their course. David says *kol hashem shover arazim*, G'd can break even the "giants", i.e. powerful kings, – especially when they oppress Israel with undue cruelty.

He has demonstrated this in the past when He smashed all the mighty kings i.e. *arzey halevanon*, who had opposed Joshua. Jerusalem was also called such, as per Isaiah 10,34 "Lebanon will fall only by a mighty one". Because G'd has demonstrated His power against those who thought of themselves as unassailable once before, you Israel have no reason to believe that G'd would not do so again, – as a response to your *kavod* and *oz*, repentance and good

ה קוֹל יְהוָה בַּכֹּחַ קוֹל יְהוָה בֶּהָדָר:
ו קוֹל יְהוָה שֹׁבֵר אֲרָזִים וַיְשַׁבֵּר יְהוָה אֶת-אַרְזֵי
הַלְּבָנוֹן:
ז וַיַּרְקִידֵם כְּמוֹ-עֵגֶל לְבָנוֹן וְשִׂרְיוֹן כְּמוֹ בֶן-רְאֵמִים:
ח קוֹל-יְהוָה חֹצֵב לַהֲבוֹת אֵשׁ:
ט קוֹל יְהוָה יָחִיל מִדְבָּר יָחִיל יְהוָה מִדְבַּר קָדֵשׁ

deeds. As a result the ultimate temple would be built immediately.

6. Do not be faint hearted if you see them launch an unprovoked attack on you. Do not conclude that this is proof that their celestial counterparts assist them. The 5 kings including the king of Jerusalem have done likewise in the days of Joshua, (Joshua 10,3) and this has not prevented G'd from smashing them. He made them dance like a calf, i.e. He inspired them not to wait till Israel arrived at their borders, but to attack already by meeting Israel outside their borders. This gave G'd a chance to destroy them simultaneously, instead of one at a time.

Siryon, is a reference to Sichon, who also attacked Israel prematurely. (Numbers 21,23) He was also known as *Chermon*, part of Lebanon. (Psalms 42,7) His attack was not only like *eygel* but like *ben re-eymim*. (See Yalkut Shimoni on Number 23,22)

Basically, the rule that the kingdom of these people respectively, does not expire sooner than the timetable appointed for them by G'd, is true only if they do not venture OUTSIDE their assigned borders and attack Israel.

David therefore reassures Israel that they need not fear that because the measure of these kingdoms' sin is not full yet, the redemption, i.e. the building of the temple which endures would have to await another age.

Ben re-eymim according to Rashi on Avodah Zarah 3, is a gigantic beast. Sichon's attack on Israel is compared to that of a gigantic beast, i.e. more frightening than the attack of the 5 kings on Joshua and his army.

7. G'd struck first, *lahavot eysh* at the celestial representatives of these 5 kings – prior to Joshua defeating them.

8. Concerning your second fear, that simultaneous destruction of the gentile nations would result in the earth becoming desolate, David, i.e. G'd reminds Israel that when they were in the desert, G'd had kept all the dangerous reptiles etc. of the desolate parts of the

9 *the voice of the LORD causes hinds to calve, and strips*
forests bare; while in His temple all say "Glory!"
10 *The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood; the LORD sits*
enthroned, king forever.
11 *May the LORD grant strength to His people; may the*
LORD bestow on His people wellbeing.

BOOK TWO

30 *A psalm of David. A song for the dedication of the House.*
2 *I extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up, and*
not let my enemies rejoice over me.

earth at bay, i.e. *yachil midbar*. Just as there was no water for you at Kadesh, – so G'd can let the beasts die of thirst, also. (Numbers 20,1)

9. Concerning your third fear, the *chevley mashiach*, the painful birthpangs attending the ushering in of the Messianic age, David concedes that such a phenomenon will occur. One of the functions of a display of *kol Hashem*, the voice of G'd, is to produce the Messiah, i.e. *yecholel ayalot* etc., He has to denude the trees. The saviours of Israel are likened to *ayalot* (Midrash Tehillim), based on Song of Songs 2,9, *domeh dodi latzvi o la-ofer ayalim*, my redeemer is like a young hart. Being frightened by the bite of a serpent will produce a premature birth in the hart, i.e. will bring on redemption suddenly, unexpectedly. The serpent then is symbolic of the painful birthpangs of the approach of the Messiah.

At that time, in the celestial sanctuary, *be-heychalo kulo omer kavod*, all classes of angels will agree *omer kavod*, to the coming of the Messiah, not like at the time when G'd was about to create man, when several classes of angels opposed his creation. (Bereshit Rabbah 8,2)

10. Concerning Israel's 4th fear, that if the redemption were to come now and all the nations would be destroyed, G'd would not have much of mankind left to be king over, David allays that consideration. He says that G'd does not require numbers. He brought a deluge once, and was content with being king over only one family, that of Noach. History teaches that nonetheless *vayeshev Hashem melech le-olam*, He remained king forever more.

11. Finally, Israel's 5th concern that experiencing too much of G'd's

ט קוֹל יְהוָה יְחוֹלֵל אַיָּלוֹת וַיֶּחֱשֹׂף יְעָרוֹת וּבְהֵיכָלוֹ כֻּלּוֹ אֹמֵר כָּבוֹד:

י יְהוָה לַמַּבּוּל יָשָׁב וַיֵּשֶׁב יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם:

יא יְהוָה עֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן יְהוָה יְבָרֵךְ אֶת-עַמּוֹ בַשָּׁלוֹם:

ספר שני

ל

א מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר חֲנֻכַּת הַבַּיִת לְדָוִד:

ב אֲרוֹמִמְךָ יְהוָה כִּי דִלִּיתָנִי וְלֹא-שִׂמַּחְתָּ אֹיְבַי לִי:

goodness will prove corrosive to man's character, and man would become arrogant and act highhandedly towards his fellow man. Although it is true that the cause of our exile has been primarily the lack of harmony and our constantly strife ridden lifestyle, this will change, says the Psalmist. By granting *oz*, strength instead of weakness, G'd will also bless Israel with peace and harmony so that there will be no pride which is the source of divisiveness.

Psalm 30

1. The use of both the word *mizmor* and *shir* for Psalm, seems unnecessary duplication. Besides, since David was NOT the one who consecrated the temple, why would this be HIS hymn?

Probably, the reason David is given credit is that the portals of Solomon's temple refused to open to admit the holy ark until Solomon in his prayer invoked the merits of his father, i.e. ***ba-avur David avdecha al tashev peney meshichecha***, do not turn away from Your anointed servant David. (compare Talmud Shabbat 30)

The author appears to understand the Talmud to mean that David's ark, i.e. his sarcophagus had to be brought near the temple. (compare Shemot Rabbah 44,2). At any rate, we see from the above that the consecration of the temple was due mainly to David's merit.

David speaks about this here, having been granted prophetic insight. The word *mizmor* tells us that this hymn was inspired. The word *shir*, refers to THE FACT that David's spirit being present at the inauguration, enabled it to take place.

2. The Talmud Shabbat 30, describes how the faces of David's one time enemies turned all colours when they noticed that access for the holy ark to the sanctuary became possible only after David's

3O LORD, my God, I cried out to You, and You healed me.
4O LORD, You brought me up from Sheol, *preserved me from going down into the Pit.*
5O you faithful of the LORD, sing to Him, and praise His holy name.
6For He is angry but a moment, and when He is pleased there is life.
One may lie down weeping at nightfall; but at dawn there are shouts of joy.
7When I was untroubled, I thought, "I shall never be shaken,"
8for You, O LORD, when You were pleased, made [me] firm as a mighty mountain.
When You hid Your face, I was terrified.

name had been invoked in Solomon's prayers. David acknowledges this act of kindness by G'd by saying *aromimcha* etc. I will exalt you etc.

He emphasizes the positive aspect of his joy. The demonstration that G'd is close to him causes David's joy, not the discomfiture of his enemies. However, he is glad that his enemies have been denied the opportunity of enjoying David's discomfort.

li, I sing for what happened to ME, not for what did NOT happen to them. *dilitani*, You have raised me, i.e. like a pail from a well.

3. Here David explains the process. He had turned to G'd in order for his soul to be cured. As a result, when G'd cures the spirit, He cures the body also, i.e. *vatirpa-eyni*. G'd commences by curing the body, – subsequently, *he-elita min she-aul nafshi*, You elevated my soul from the eternal grave.

According to the principle that when someone prays for the needs of another person, though he himself is in need of the same thing, G'd first looks after the needs of the supplicant, (Baba Kama 92) this is what happened here.

4. Not only did You save my soul from purgatory, but also my body, i.e. *chiyitani miyordi bor*. We are told (Vayikra Rabbah 4,5) that since body and soul deny responsibility for their sins, each accusing the other, G'd consigns them both to purgatory. He treats them like a lame and a blind person who combined their talents to steal, while each pleaded his innocence pointing to their respective

ג יְהוָה אֱלֹהָי שִׁוַּעְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ וַתִּרְפָּאֵנִי׃
ד יְהוָה הֶעֱלִיתָ מִן־שְׁאוֹל נַפְשִׁי חִיִּיתַנִי מִיָּרְדִי בוֹר׃
ה זַמְּרוּ לַיהוָה חֲסִידָיו וְהוֹדוּ לְזֵכֶר קָדְשׁוֹ׃
ו כִּי רֶגַע בְּאַפּוֹ חַיִּים בִּרְצוֹנוֹ בָּעֶרֶב יָלִין בֶּכִי וְלַבֹּקֶר רִנָּה׃
ז וַאֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי בְשַׁלְוִי בַּל־אֶמּוֹט לְעוֹלָם׃
ח יְהוָה בִּרְצוֹנְךָ הֶעֱמַדְתָּה לְהַרְרִי עֹז הִסְתַּרְתָּ פָנֶיךָ הָיִיתִי נִבְהָל׃

handicaps as proof of their innocence. David acknowledges not only the recovery of his body from sickness, but also the fact that his body will not be consigned to purgatory. The *chirik* tone sign under the word *miyordi* refers to his personal descent to purgatory.

5. Having experienced this new dimension of G'd's greatness in supplying life through sickness, i.e. the threat of denial of life, David feels that to thank G'd only personally, is inadequate. He therefore asks all the pious to thank G'd for His conduct, to advise them not only to thank G'd when they clearly experience the attribute of mercy, but also when they experience what appears to be the attribute of G'd's justice. He refers to the attribute of justice as *zecher kodsho*, (compare Exodus 3,15 and Pessachim 50 end of chapter.)

6. The instant, i.e. *rega*, that G'd is angry, is in order that *chayim* a whole lifetime will be spent in His favour. The evening WILL be spent weeping, – before the arrival of the painful experiences. The weeping has as its purpose that there will be joy by morning. *laboker* instead of *baboker*, indicates that the purpose of the weeping experience is to enable a joyful morning to occur. *Af* is an anger which is exterior, – visible on the face, but not deep seated.

7. David describes himself as a living example of this philosophy. He had thought that he was set for life, – only to find out that this was not so. He had believed himself righteous; therefore if not for his sickness, he would not have known that he had something to repent.

8. If You would display ongoing approval of me, *birtzoncha*, and would allow me to maintain my lofty position, *lehareri oz*, instead of *histarta panecho* in the end withdrawing from me, I would never become frightened and do *teshuvah*.

9*I called to You, O LORD; to my LORD I made appeal,*
10*"What is to be gained from my death, from my descent into the Pit? Can dust praise You? Can it declare Your faithfulness?*
11*Hear, O LORD, and have mercy on me; O LORD, be my help!"*
12*You turned my lament into dancing, you undid my sackcloth and girded me with joy,*
13*that [my] whole being might sing hymns to You endlessly; O LORD my God, I will praise You forever.*

31 *For the leader. A psalm of David.*
2*I seek refuge in You, O LORD; may I never be disappointed; as You are righteous, rescue me.*

9. Because You ***dilitani***, made me poorly, sick, I called out to You, ***elecha ekra***, and I pleaded with You for forgiveness. As a result, ***hafachta mispedi***, You reversed my mourning. (verse 12)

Verse 8 can also be a description of what happened, instead of what could have happened. You allowed me to think You approved of me, and subsequently hid Your face. This is why I became ***nivhal***, frightened and repented.

The 13 attributes of G'd taught Moses in Exodus 34,6–7, to be invoked when pleading with G'd, present a problem. Most commentators understand the first word ***hashem*** as a call to G'd. Only the second ***hashem*** would represent an attribute the supplicant appeals to. (Rosh Hashanah 17, Tossaphot ***shlosh essreh***)

David here describes how to entreat G'd while he was sick.

First, he says, ***elecha hashem ekra***, I called Your name. (In verse 11 he describes the first attribute of G'd he pleaded with)

10. But, – he interposes – what good is my death, hence do not even let me begin to invoke Your attributes.

11. Rather, listen to me and grant me grace, favour; as soon as You hear me proclaim Your name, grant me favour already. By the time I mention Your name a second time in the guise of one of Your attributes, ***heyeh ozer li***, become my helper!

Verse 10 can be understood on two levels. 1) If I am a ***tzaddik***, why let me die, since I cannot serve You once I am dead. 2) If I am a sinner, why let me die when I can no longer rehabilitate myself by my own efforts. Better to let me live, so that I can rehabilitate myself.

ט אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אֶקְרָא וְאֶל-אֲדֹנָי אֶתְחַנָּן:
י מַה-בֶּצַע בְּדָמִי בְּרִדְתִּי אֶל- שָׁחַת הֲיוֹדְךָ עָפָר הֲיַגִּיד
אֲמִתֶּךָ:
יא שְׁמַע-יְהוָה וְחָנֵּנִי יְהוָה הֱיֵה עֹזֵר לִי:
יב הָפַכְתָּ מִסְפְּדִי לְמָחוֹל לִי פִּתַּחְתָּ שַׂקִּי וַתְּאַזְּרֵנִי
שִׂמְחָה:
יג לְמַעַן יְזַמֶּרְךָ כָבוֹד וְלֹא יִדֹּם יְהוָה אֱלֹהַי לְעוֹלָם
אוֹדֶךָּ:

לא א לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
ב בְּךָ-יְהוָה חָסִיתִי אַל אֵבוֹשָׁה לְעוֹלָם בְּצִדְקָתְךָ
פַלְּטֵנִי:

The *heye ozer li*, be my helper, may be addressed to the *midat harachamim*, the attribute of mercy which already had displayed favour. David want protection, – against the *midat hadin*, attribute of justice.

12. David emphasizes that he does not ask G'd's favour for personal indulgences. Verse 12 is a rhetorical question, "would I then use all those favours received for personal enjoyment?"

13. No, says David, I am asking only in order to be able to sing about Your glory nightly. Bereshit Rabbah 94,9, explains that the reason that insubordination against David is equated with insubordination against G'd is, the Presence of the *Shechinah* within David.

The *kavod*, glory, which is described as singing to G'd, is the *Shechinah* within David. *velo yidom*, only if I remain alive will this heavenly music not be stilled. Therefore, David feels it is of interest to G'd that he should remain alive.

Psalm 31

2. It appears that this Psalm was composed before David had become king, and while he was still being pursued by Saul. He refers to having been burned by two fires. 1) He might kill an adversary, perchance even Saul himself. Since Saul had been anointed king by

[3]Incline Your ear to me; be quick to save me; be a rock, a stronghold for me, a citadel, for my deliverance.
[4]For You are my rock and my fortress; You lead me and guide me as befits Your name.
[5]You free me from the net laid for me, for You are my stronghold.
[6]Into Your hand I entrust my spirit; You redeem me, O LORD, faithful God.
[7]I detest those who rely on empty folly, but I trust in the LORD.
[8]Let me exult and rejoice in Your faithfulness when You notice my affliction, are mindful of my deep distress,

Divine decree, no one harming him could be considered free from guilt. (Samuel I 26,9) 2) He was afraid he himself might be killed. In the former case, he was concerned about his spiritual survival, in the latter case, David was worried about his physical survival.

David says that he is sure he had always trusted in G'd and therefore was in no danger of being shamed either in this world or in the world to come, even if he did not offer prayer for this specifically. The reason he does pray is that his survival should not be at the expense of the merits he had previously accumulated. He wants his survival to be due to an act of ***tzedakah***, charity by G'd.

3. The principal reason he prays additionally, is to ask G'd to save him QUICKLY. The reason he asks for speedy help is in order for G'd to be his rock of strength, ***tzur ma-oz***, not because he wants the death of his enemies. Since he finds himself in a dual predicament (as explained in verse 2), he speaks about ***beyt metzudot***, i.e. 2 refuges (not just ***metzudah***. One is to cool off his urge to kill his pursuers, the other to hide himself from them physically.

4. There are two kinds of protection a warrior can enjoy. Either he has his back to a wall, facing his enemies, but certain that he cannot be outflanked, or, an even better protection, a fortress in which the warrior is protected from all sides.

Concerning protection of his ***nefesh***, soul, David refers to G'd as ***sal-i***, my rock, i.e. You are a wall behind me. He is engaged in fighting his urge to kill the enemy. The ***yetzer hara***, evil urge, who would push him from behind is neutralized by G'd acting as his wall behind him. Since David fights his ***yetzer hara***, evil urge, actively, he deserves support. (Shabbat 104) On the other hand, ***attah metzudati*** You are my fortress by protecting my body against being killed.

The reason G'd cannot grant the same degree of protection

ג הַטֵּה אֵלַי אָזְנְךָ מְהֵרָה הַצִּילֵנִי הֱיֵה לִי לְצוּר מָעוֹז
לְבֵית מְצוּדוֹת לְהוֹשִׁיעֵנִי:
ד כִּי-סַלְעִי וּמְצוּדָתִי אָתָּה וּלְמַעַן שִׁמְךָ תַּנְחֵנִי
וּתְנַהֲלֵנִי:
ה תּוֹצִיאֵנִי מֵרֶשֶׁת זוּ טָמְנוּ לִי כִּי אַתָּה מָעֻזִּי:
ו בְּיָדְךָ אַפְקִיד רוּחִי פָּדִיתָה אוֹתִי יְהוָה אֵל אֱמֶת:
ז שָׂנֵאתִי הַשֹּׁמְרִים הַבְלֵי-שָׁוְא וַאֲנִי אֶל יְהוָה בָּטָחְתִּי:
ח אָגִילָה וְאֶשְׂמְחָה בְּחַסְדֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתָ אֶת-עָנְיִי יָדַעְתָּ
בְּצָרוֹת נַפְשִׁי:

against the attacks of the *yetzer hara* is, that in that battle man must take the initiative. Our sages have said "all is within the power of heaven except the fear of heaven." (Berachot 33) Therefore David asks auxiliary support from G'd in his battle against his evil urge.

5. He asks to be rescued from the net that his enemies have trapped him in, meaning to kill him. Inasmuch as rescuing David from his enemies is not an act of interference with the free will of his adversaries, and only frustrates their objective, David feels free to ask for this.

6. David describes G'd as *el emet* a true power, since, contrary to human relationships which are based on reciprocity, one cannot reciprocate for anything G'd does, since He is not in need of anything. David entrusts his spirit to G'd, since he is concerned first and foremost with his soul. If, beyond that, G'd redeems *oti*, i.e. my body, this is a TRUE act of kindness, since G'd expects nothing in return.

7. Should anyone accuse David of being primarily concerned with the survival of his body in order that he could enjoy the career which Samuel had anointed him for, David categorically denies such ambitions. "I have come to hate those who indulge in vanities" (such as positions of authority and power.) The choice of *el hashem* instead of *al hashem*, indicates that he trusts and looks forward to what G'd does, not to what G'd does for him. The word *shomer* means watching expectantly, as in Genesis 37,11 "his father watched for the matter". (when it would happen)

8. *agilah*, I will jubilate for the salvation of my soul, *esmechah*, I will be happy for the survival of my body, i.e. for not having had to kill nor being killed. *tzarot nafshi*, the dual problems of my soul. My soul was

9and do not hand me over to my enemy, but grant me relief.
10Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes are wasted by vexation, my substance and body too.
11My life is spent in sorrow, my years in groaning; my strength fails because of my iniquity, my limbs waste away.
12Because of all my foes I am the particular butt of my neighbors, a horror to my friends; those who see me on the street avoid me.
13I am put out of mind like the dead; I am like an object given up for lost.
14I hear the whisperings of many, intrigue on every side, as they scheme together against me, plotting to take my life.
15But I trust in You, O LORD; I say, "You are my God!"

not ONLY concerned with the worry that I might have to kill; it was also concerned with the danger of my body being killed.

9. You responded by not delivering me into the hands of my evil urge, i.e. ***beyt oyev***; at the same time You placed my feet in such a position ***merchav***, wide spaces, i.e. saved my body from the trap.

10. Now David asks that his rescue should not be debited against any accumulated credits that he possesses, but his rescue should be counted as a free gift from G'd. This is why he uses the term ***choneyni hashem***. This is similar to Moses' request in Deut. 3,23 "I asked G'd for a favour".

After all, G'd had told Moses in Exodus 33,19 "I will grant favour to whom I shall grant favour etc." David emphasizes that since his concern had been primarily of a spiritual nature, his salvation should not be deducted from his other merits.

11. If he had become guilty of any sin, this was due to his having exhausted his strength in battling his ***yetzer hara*** who urged him to kill his enemies, ***atzamay asheshu***, i.e. even my bones wasted away.

12. Wherein lay this ***atzamay asheshu***? My appearance underwent such a change that everybody shunned me. My oppressors no longer thought me worthwhile hating, my disgrace was so overwhelming. My one time friends and acquaintances who had known me in better days, were afraid of me, ***pachad li-meyuda-ay***.

13. If his body were to die in a normal fashion, i.e. he would lie in his grave, asleep, awaiting re-surrection, this would not bother me,

ט וְלֹא הִסְגַּרְתַּנִי בְּיַד-אוֹיֵב הֶעֱמַדְתָּ בַמֶּרְחָב רַגְלָי:
י חָנֵּנִי יְהוָה כִּי צַר לִי עָשְׁשָׁה בְכַעַס עֵינִי נַפְשִׁי וּבִטְנִי:
יא כִּי כָלוּ בְיָגוֹן חַיַּי וּשְׁנוֹתַי בָּאֲנָחָה כָּשַׁל בַּעֲוֹנִי כֹחִי וַעֲצָמַי עָשֵׁשׁוּ:
יב מִכָּל-צוֹרְרַי הָיִיתִי חֶרְפָּה וְלִשְׁכֵנַי מְאֹד וּפַחַד לִמְיֻדָּעָי רֹאַי בַּחוּץ נָדְדוּ מִמֶּנִּי:
יג נִשְׁכַּחְתִּי כְּמֵת מִלֵּב הָיִיתִי כִּכְלִי אֹבֵד:
יד כִּי שָׁמַעְתִּי דִבַּת רַבִּים מָגוֹר מִסָּבִיב בְּהִוָּסְדָם יַחַד עָלַי לָקַחַת נַפְשִׁי זָמָמוּ:
טו וַאֲנִי עָלֶיךָ בָטַחְתִּי יְהוָה אָמַרְתִּי אֱלֹהַי אָתָּה:

says David. What bothers me is that I was not like THAT in the eyes of those who looked upon me, but *kichli oved*, I was like a vessel which is irretrievably lost, never to be repaired. David is concerned about the pain his soul suffers at the prospect of never becoming re-united with his body. Since my concern is for my soul, David says, I hope to receive grace from G'd.

14. Proof of my concern for my soul is the fact that when I heard of the many who planned to kill me, this did not disturb me. The word *shemi-ah* always refers to something or somebody distant, as in Isaiah 1,2. (Yalkut Shimoni) What worried me, *magor misaviv*, the terror close to me, i.e. the efforts of my *yetzer hara* to lead me to commit a sin. The forces my own sin had created, tormented me to commit further sins, and thus they represented an attack on my soul, i.e. *zamemu nafshi*. The sin David keeps being afraid of is the slaying of Jews, or to begin to question G'd's justice, since He had me crowned king and it appears as if I might never sit on the throne.

15. All this in contrast to the concern for my body. I am sure I will not be killed, since I always trusted in You G'd. I trusted so much that I said "You are my G'd", meaning that I arrogated to myself the right to associate Your name with mine even during my lifetime. (compare chapter 2)

16. Proof that You ARE my G'd is the supernatural way I came into this world. The timing of my birth and death is entirely in Your

16 *My fate is in Your hand; save me from the hand of my enemies and pursuers.*
17 *Show favor to Your servant; as You are faithful, deliver me.*
18 *O LORD, let me not be disappointed when I call You; let the wicked be disappointed; let them be silenced in* Sheol;
19 *let lying lips be stilled that speak haughtily against the righteous with arrogance and contempt.*
20 *How abundant is the good that You have in store for those who fear You, that You do in the full view of men for those who take refuge in You.*

hand. (compare our commentary on chapter 2, verse 7) If my enemies were to kill me, my death would be attributed to them and not to Your hand.

17. Do not save ME by KILLING them, but light up MY face so that they will become afraid to harm me. Also, save me with Your kindness, i.e. do not deduct from my merits, but make my salvation a gift.

18. In this way the fact I called on You, will not result in my shame for having caused the death of other Jews. If Jews had to die in order for me to survive, I would prefer death myself, in order to save myself that shame. Solomon, in Proverbs 17,26, already says *onesh latzadik lo tov*, it is not good to be the cause of a *tzaddik*'s punishment. Much worse when the *tzaddik* in question is of the stature of king Saul.

Do not say to me G'd that You will kill only the *resha-im* wicked people amongst my enemies. Better they should feel ashamed and become penitents in this life. After all, You do not want the death of a sinner, but his return to You in penitence. (from the *unetane tokef* prayer in the New Year's liturgy.) When my enemies observe the manner of my salvation, *yidmu lish-aul* they will become silent as the grave – and do penitence!

19. Also the lips speaking lies against the *tzaddik* will fall silent. Our sages understand the word *tzaddik* as a reference to G'd Himself, "THE TZADDIK". (Bereshit Rabbah 1,5, Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim item 815)

The meaning then would be along these lines. If the pursuit of David resulted in his death, the wicked would conclude that there is no point in serving the Lord. (as David had done). This would be a

סז בְּיָדְךָ עִתֹּתָי הַצִּילֵנִי מִיַּד-אוֹיְבַי וּמֵרֹדְפָי:
יז הָאִירָה פָנֶיךָ עַל-עַבְדֶּךָ הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי בְחַסְדֶּךָ:
יח יְהוָה אַל-אֵבוֹשָׁה כִּי קְרָאתִיךָ יֵבֹשׁוּ רְשָׁעִים יִדְמוּ לִשְׁאוֹל:
יט תֵּאָלַמְנָה שִׂפְתֵי שָׁקֶר הַדֹּבְרוֹת עַל-צַדִּיק עָתָק בְּגַאֲוָה וָבוּז:
כ מָה רַב טוּבְךָ אֲשֶׁר-צָפַנְתָּ לִירֵאֶיךָ פָּעַלְתָּ לַחוֹסִים בָּךְ נֶגֶד בְּנֵי אָדָם:

chilul hashem, desecration of the name of the Lord. Hence it is important that such comments not be made, i.e. "the lips should be silenced". David will be saved, so that those who thought that the worship of G'd is pointless will repent.

20. We have explained that saving a person from the attack of a free willed individual is extremely difficult for G'd, since He does not interfere with the free choice of the sinners. Nonetheless, G'd extends Himself to bring about such salvations WITHOUT encroaching on the free will of the wicked.

Normally, even trust in G'd by the *tzaddik*, righteous person, seems futile; in such instances, since G'd cannot curtail the free will of his adversary. After all, the adversary trusts in the Lord NOT to interfere with his freedom of choice. G'd might even consider the *tzaddik*'s trust as an act of naivete. David replies to such reasoning by saying that it is foolish. There is NO limit to what faith in G'd can accomplish, says David.

Bereshit Rabbah says that the reward in store for the *tzaddikim* is a greater act than the creation of the world. The expression *pe-ulah* does not appear in the account of creation. The only expressions we read there are *bara, yatzar* and *assah*. Here, however, we find that G'd uses a *pe-ulah*, performs an act, for those who put their trust in Him. This is why David describes this as *rav tuvcha*. Your goodness is greater for those who trust in You than what You have kept in store for those who revere You. The trust expresses itself by the conviction that G'd will save them even against *ba-aley bechirah*, people with free choice. There is no limit to G'd's ability to save, as we know from what Chananyah Mishael and Azaryah said to Nebuchadnezzar. (Daniel 3,17–18) "He is able to save us from the flaming kiln, AND FROM YOUR HAND." This had been

21You grant them the protection of Your presence against scheming men; You shelter them in Your pavilion from contentious tongues.
22Blessed is the LORD, for He has been wondrously faithful to me, a veritable bastion.
23Alarmed, I had thought, "I am thrust out of Your sight"; yet You listened to my plea for mercy when I cried out to You.
24So love the LORD, all you faithful; the LORD guards the loyal, and more than requites him who acts arrogantly.
25Be strong and of good courage, all you who wait for the LORD.

said in reply to the king's statement "who is the god who will save you from my hand?" Nebuchadnezzar had meant that even if G'd were to save you from the flaming kiln, He cannot save you from the freedom of choice He has granted me!

21. Not only can You save the *tzaddikim* from their adversaries at a time of *ratzon* goodwill; even at a time when the *Shechinah* is in *galut*, exile, when G'd has hidden His face from His people, You will hide them from their enemies. David's being a fugitive was proof that G'd had at least temporarily withheld His face from him. Despite this, the fact that David continued to trust in G'd unshakably, enabled G'd to shield him from his pursuers and Saul, "the plottings of man", i.e. Saul's attempt to secure the succession of his throne for one of his sons, thereby denying it to David.

G'd hid David, *meriv leshonot*, from the slanderous tongues of the Zippim, (Samuel I 23,19) who had told Saul about David's hideout. Our sages explain that the reason Saul did not discover David and his men in the cave, was that as soon as David entered the cave, a spider wove its web over the entrance. Saul reasoned that if David had hidden inside, he would have left a trace by destroying the spider's web. Therefore, one could say that G'd hid them in a flimsy shelter, *titzpenem besukkah*.

22. G'd rescued David from an even greater danger, when David was already in Ke-ilah, a fortified town. (Samuel I 23,12)

23. At that time, David said prematurely i.e. *bechofsi*, in my haste "I am cut off from before Your eyes". He had been convinced that G'd would not interfere with the designs of his enemies. Still, You responded to my pleas, *shamata kol tachanunay* and did not deny

כא תַּסְתִּירֵם בְּסֵתֶר פָּנֶיךָ מֵרֶכְסֵי אִישׁ תִּצְפְּנֵם בְּסֻכָּה
מֵרִיב לְשֹׁנוֹת:
כב בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה כִּי-הִפְלִיא חַסְדּוֹ לִי בְּעִיר מָצוֹר:
כג וַאֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי בְחָפְזִי נִגְרַזְתִּי מִנֶּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ אָכֵן
שָׁמַעְתָּ קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנַי בְּשַׁוְּעִי אֵלֶיךָ:
כד אֶהֱבוּ אֶת-יְהוָה כָּל-חֲסִידָיו אֱמוּנִים נֹצֵר יְהוָה
וּמְשַׁלֵּם עַל-יֶתֶר עֹשֵׂה גַאֲוָה:
כה חִזְקוּ וְיַאֲמֵץ לְבַבְכֶם כָּל-הַמְיַחֲלִים לַיהוָה:

me my escape. (G'd had advised David to leave that town, though David had thought that he was safe there)

Perhaps, David simply wants to tell us that a person's personal misfortunes are no clue to his worth in the eyes of G'd. The Talmud in Moed Katan 28, relates the divergent personal fortunes of Rabbah and Rav Chisdah.

Nonetheless, when either of them prayed for rain, it promptly materialized. Had they not BOTH been beloved by G'd, this surely would not have been the case. David therefore received re-assurance of his standing as a *tzaddik* when G'd promptly responded to his prayer, i.e. *shamat kol* etc. He had been premature in judging the conditions in Ke-ilah as indicating that he had lost favour in the eyes of G'd, and that *hashgachah peratit* had been replaced by *hashgachah kellalit*, guidance of his fate based on natural law.

24. David warns all those who are impressed by his experiences NOT to love G'd for their own selfish reasons. "Do not think that your personal piety entitles you to expect miracles from G'd. Love Him inasmuch as He is the merciful G'd. If your love is based on selfish considerations, you are subject to being repaid *yetter osseh ga-avah*, for being too haughty in your self esteem. One must not boast of one's piety. Instead of a miracle, – one may incur punishment.

25. You may say that this is very difficult, since the *yetzer hara* compliments you on your piety, and you feel that G'd must help you when you are in trouble by FORCING you to do good because of a pious track record. David refers to "your hearts" (plural, i.e. the dual heart). We know that in Deut. 31,6 "fear not, do not be afraid", means that if you display fear, I will make you more afraid, says G'd. If we do

32 *Of David. A* maskil.
Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered over.
[2]*Happy the man whom the LORD does not hold guilty, and in whose spirit there is not deceit.*

not display faith in G'd, as a punishment, the *yetzer hara* will make us even more afraid.

Similarly, we read in Jeremiah 1,17 "do not be afraid of them, lest I make you scared of them". Just as initial LACK of faith is re-inforced by G'd's agents as a penalty, so David says, an initial amount of faith and trust in G'd will be re-inforced by further doses of such trust with G'd's help. *Chizku*, i.e. be strong by your own input, and *veya-ametz* He will add His inspiration as a reward.

Psalm 32

1. We need to understand why David mentions two categories of sin, namely *pesha*, deliberate insubordination to G'd, and *chata-ah*, inadvertent sin, while he fails to mention the third category, i.e. *avon*, a knowingly committed transgression prompted by the urgings of man's baser instincts, the *yetzer hara*.

Besides, why does David refer to *nessuy*, i.e. elevated (forgiven) when referring to *pesha*, whereas he refers only to *kissuy*, covered, when speaking about *chet* the inadvertently committed sin?

In verse 2, David refers to *adam*, whereas in verse 1 the subject is not precisely defined. Why? Also, it hardly seems worth telling us that *eyn berucho remiyah*, that if a person does not repent in a deceptive manner he deserves to be hailed, i.e. *ashrey*! His entire so called *teshuvah* would be an abomination, much less praiseworthy!

Surely G'd would account such *teshuvah* as an *avon*, sin! Besides, why do we need to be told that if someone thinks evil, G'd does not count this as a sin against him? (Kiddushin 40)

The Talmud in Yuma 86 tells us in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish that repentance is great since it transforms intentionally committed sins into unintentionally committed ones. To the question that elsewhere the same Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish has stated that repentance is great because it transforms the debits of intentionally committed sins into actual merits, the Talmud answers that in the first instance Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish referred to repentance motivated by the fear of retribution for the sins committed. In the latter statement, the repentance was motivated by love of G'd on the part of the erstwhile sinner.

David in our Psalm does not refer to unintentional sinners

לב א לְדָוִד מַשְׂכִּיל אַשְׁרֵי נְשׂוּי-פֶשַׁע כְּסוּי חֲטָאָה:
ב אַשְׁרֵי אָדָם לֹא יַחְשֹׁב יְהוָה לוֹ עָוֹן וְאֵין בְּרוּחוֹ
רְמִיָּה:

altogether. He speaks only about people who have committed sins knowingly, and have repented, and whose sins G'd has forgiven.

When we look closely at the subtle changes in expression, we will observe that in verse 1 David speaks about *nessuy*, i.e. forgiven, – whereas in verse 2 he speaks about *lo yachshov*, He does not CONSIDER it (an intentional sin). Why does David not refer to an expression of atonement or forgiveness, but expressly about *nessuy*? (an unusual term meaning "raised, elevated" This term occurs only once more in the entire Bible in Isaiah 33,24.)

There are two categories of intentional sins. Both are sub categories of what is called *zedonot*. There is *pesha*, the deliberate insubordination, and there is *avon*, ordinary sinning. He who repents EVEN from such sins as he had committed deliberately in order to anger G'd, is called *me-ushar*, happy, worthy of praise, – though his former sins have not been transformed into merits, but have only been "covered" to become like unintentional sins. However, he who had only been guilty of ordinary sins, inspired by the weakness of the flesh, is not called *me-ushar*, but *lo yachshov*, i.e. – G'd does not consider his former sins as being still in existence, not even as unintentional sins. This is why in the first instance David refers to the *pesha* as if it had lifted itself, i.e. *nessuy*, but is still like a layer of unintentional sin, i.e. *kissuy chet*. Such a person does not qualify as yet for the title of *adam*, the choicest of descriptions of the human species. He has not yet been purified.

2. Should you ask what kind of happiness the former *poshe-a* does enjoy, seeing he is still held to account for his sins as an unintentional sinner, and has not been totally rehabilitated? David says that one must not say anything like that.

It is cause for happiness that especially a *tzaddik*, i.e. normally righteous person who qualified for the term *adam* and towards whom G'd is more demanding, should have had such a severe sin as *pesha* reduced by two categories. It is remarkable that G'd does not consider his erstwhile *pesha* as *avon*, but as *chet*. This is a great act of kindness by G'd, even if such a person's repentance had not been due to fear of punishment. Had the repentance been inspired only by fear of retribution, it would contain an element of *remiyah*, deceit.

Alternately, if one takes the view that *pesha* is NEVER

3As long as I said nothing, my limbs wasted away from my anguished roaring all day long.
4For night and day Your hand lay heavy on me; my vigor waned as in the summer drought. Selah.
5Then I aknowledged my sin to You; I did not cover up my guilt; I resolved, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.

transformed into a merit, even if the repentance is inspired by love for G'd, and that the most that such a *ba-al teshuvah* can expect is to be treated as a *shogeg*, unintentional sinner, – he does have reason to feel happy, i.e. *ashrey*.

However, such a person does not qualify for the term *adam* without reservations, so that G'd would not consider his sins as an *avon* at all. To qualify for such term, his *teshuvah* must be free from all personal considerations or it is *remiyah*.

Another traditional view is the relative meaning of *ashrey*.

Someone whose *pesha* has been transformed into *chet*, unintentional sin, is happy; even happier however, is he whom G'd does not hold accountable at all, who does not need to repent since he had not sinned. This seems in conflict with the statement that repentant sinners are on an ethically higher niveau than those who have remained totally righteous throughout. (Berachot 34) David appears to take an opposite view then. This is puzzling, since Maimonides and all the later authorities accept the view expressed in the Talmud.

To reconcile this, we must understand David to mean that since there have only been 4 such total *tzaddikim* whose death would not have occurred had it not been a general decree for the human race, due to the pollutant absorbed by Adam from the serpent, such considerations are really marginal. (compare Shabbat 55)

At the same time, the Talmud Rosh Hashanah 17, explains Exodus 34,6 to imply that *nosseh avon* means, that if the sins and merits are in balance, G'd ignores the next 2 sins i.e. *ma-avir rishon rishon*, before commencing the count of culpable sins. It follows that *ashrey nessuy avon*, happy is he whose sins have been ignored in such a fashion. David expresses some sort of envy of people who are beneficiaries of this attribute of G'd, i.e. who have committed fewer than 3 sins. This attribute is effective only, if the people in question are not simultaneously guilty of sins in the planning stage but not yet carried out, i.e. *ve-eyn beruach remiyah*, that they do not plan to

ג כִּי הֶחֱרַשְׁתִּי בָלוּ עַצְמַי בְּשַׁאֲגָתִי כָּל-הַיּוֹם׃
ד כִּי יוֹמָם וָלַיְלָה תִּכְבַּד עָלַי יָדֶךָ נֶהְפַּךְ לְשַׁדִּי בְּחַרְבֹנֵי
קַיִץ סֶלָה׃
ה חַטָּאתִי אוֹדִיעֲךָ וַעֲוֹנִי לֹא-כִסִּיתִי אָמַרְתִּי אוֹדֶה עֲלֵי
פְשָׁעַי לַיהוָה וְאַתָּה נָשָׂאתָ עֲוֹן חַטָּאתִי סֶלָה׃

cheat. If they do, they are subject to Psalm 36,5, i.e. *Aven yachshov al mishkavo*, he plans evil on his bed.

3. In answer to the question why he does not rather envy him who has sinned, repented and whose repentance has been accepted, (as in the quotation from Berachot) David says that of course, he does envy these people also. However, I am so worried about the sin I committed, that not only can I not find peace till I shout like a lion, a whole day long, i.e. get it off my chest, but as long as I remained silent, my very bones wore away from worry.

4. You should not think that my outcry was caused by the pain I suffer from my afflictions, rather than from worry about the result of my sin. Had I cried out because of physical pain, I would have done so both by day and by night, since my pains are with me round the clock, i.e. *yom valaylah tichbad alay yadecha*. Since I cried out only by day, this shows that it has nothing to do with my physical pains. The Talmud Shabbat 89, already describes Isaac telling G'd that of the 70 years of the average person's life, he is not liable to spend more than half of his time sinning, since one does not usually sin at night etc., and the first 20 years one is not culpable for punishment.

David says *nehpach leshady*, my vital juices have been dried out. This refers to a disease which torments a person both by day and by night, i.e. *selah*, constantly, unendingly.

5. Why did David refer to his *chet*, unintentional sin by a positive statement, i.e. *odiacha*, – whereas regarding a knowingly committed sin i.e. *avon* he merely says "I did not cover it up"?

Besides, why does he refer to *avon* and *chet*, the relatively less serious sins in the singular, whereas he confesses *pesha-ay*, sins of insubordination, i.e. *pesha* in the plural?

Why does David employ the future tense when referring to *chet* and *pesha*, while using the past tense regarding *avon*? Furthermore, why does David say *amarti odeh*, I said I will confess, instead of the simple "I will confess my sins"?

The expression *avon chatati* at the end of the verse, is completely

> [6]*Therefore let every faithful man pray to You upon discovering [his sin], that the rushing mighty waters not overtake him.*

baffling! If he refers to two separate sins, he should have said *avoni vechatati*!

To understand all this we need to examine his only guilt, that of the episode with Bat Sheva. David divides this sin into 3 parts. One is the fact that he had sexual relations with her. This he calls *chet* i.e. an unintentional sin, since it was similar to eating a piece of *chelev* forbidden fat believing it to be *shuman* permitted variety of fat. She was after all, a divorcee, even if the divorce had not been made public.

As such, there was the desecration of the name of the Lord, since her divorce was not yet public knowledge.

Secondly, there was the violation of the 10th commandment not to covet something belonging to someone else. (Samuel II 12,3). This is what the prophet Nathan had accused David of. The prophet NEVER referred to David's having had intercourse with Bat Sheva, since technically there was no adultery. Also the aspect of *chilul hashem*, desecrating the Lord's name was NOT mentioned by Nathan, since what happened took place in the privacy of David's bedroom.

He did mention the *chimud*, coveting, however, and this was an *avon*, a knowingly committed transgression. "You have taken his wife for you as a wife" (ibid.). Nathan did NOT accuse David of *zimmah*, carnality, only of taking something belonging to someone else.

In addition, David had committed 2 more sins simultaneously, which counted as *pesha-im*, acts of insubordination to G'd. One is the killing of Uriah the Hittite by the sword of the *beney ammon*, which David had orchestrated. It is called *pesha*, since David did not personally derive any satisfaction from this, it was not a sin designed to gratify some physical urge.

The slaying of Uriah is one part of the *pesha*, the fact that he was slain by idol worshipping foreigners is also a *pesha* especially if we accept the view, that the *beney ammon* had idolatrous inscriptions or pictures on their swords. In Samuel II 12,9, Nathan says clearly "you have killed Uriah the Hittite by the sword. AND you killed him by the sword of the *beney ammon*". David confesses here what the prophet had not openly accused him of, and what he had not told him about (when he had said "I have sinned").

Now I will acknowledge my *chatati*, unintentional sin. Concerning my *avon*, i.e. the transgression of *lo tachmod*, however, I NEVER

עַל-זֹאת יִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל-חָסִיד אֵלֶיךָ לְעֵת מְצֹא רַק
לְשֵׁטֶף מַיִם רַבִּים אֵלָיו לֹא יַגִּיעוּ׃

concealed this; I never claimed that Bat Sheva had been meant for me. I coveted her, totally on my own. My confession to the prophet at the time I said *chatati*, I have sinned, concerned precisely this sin.

At THAT time I did not confess *pesha-ay*, thinking that sins between man and G'd such as this should be confessed only to G'd, – not to man. (compare Yuma 86)

Concerning sins between man and G'd, David uses the expression *kissuy*, cover, concealment, as it is better to conceal the existence of such sins from other people. This is why he says "I am going to admit my *pesha-ay* to G'd only, not to man. This is why I did not confess it even to the prophet.

Concerning a fourth type of sin, I need not confess at all, says David, since You have already forgiven me as is Your custom with me. David refers to instances when one commits a sin, and though such sin may be committed through ignorance, the onlooker is not aware that the person perpetrating it is unaware of the wrong he is doing. and suspects him of doing so knowingly. As a result, such an onlooker compliments himself on his superiority over the supposed sinner. Thus he himself becomes guilty of knowingly committing a sin, i.e. *avon*, because *chata*, David had committed the sin of adultery unknowingly. *Ve-attah nasata avon chatati selah*, You have always, *selah* forgiven me this kind of unintentional sin, not counting the third party's *avon* as my fault.

This does not mean that such matters can be treated lightly, rather the *chote*, the unintentional sinner needs to pray to G'd that his deeds should not implicate others in deliberate sins.

6. Such a level of conduct is reserved only for the *chassidim* the truly pious, who at the time when it is appropriate to pray, i.e. *le-eyt metzo*, during the 10 days of penitence between New Years and the day of Atonement, at the time the prophet describes as "seek out the Lord at the time He is anxious to be found", (Isaiah 55,6) *tzaddikim*, with whom the Lord is exceptionally demanding, cannot simply expect prayer to be enough to wipe out their sins. Rather, *shetef mayim rabim*, a *tzaddik* normally prays that G'd's retribution should not be like mighty flood waters washing him away. By merely praying for forgiveness, the *tzaddik* displays the humility of comparing himself to ordinary mortals. David's advice to the *chassid* then is to practice humility.

7You are my shelter; You preserve me from distress; You surround me with the joyous shouts of deliverance. Selah.
8Let me enlighten you and show you which way to go; let me offer counsel; my eye is on you.
9Be not like a senseless horse or mule whose movement must be curbed by bit and bridle; far be it from you!
10Many are the torments of the wicked, but he who trusts in the LORD shall be surrounded with favor.
11Rejoice in the LORD and exult, O you righteous; shout for joy, all upright men!

7. There are people who only praise the Lord when exceptional events such as war or other troubles have occurred and they have been spared.

If a man undertakes a journey which can be dangerous, but he is not confronted by such dangers, and he arrives at his destination without difficulty, he may not realize that G'd had gone out of His way to spare him the confrontation with any hazard. On account of that, such an unthinking traveller fails to praise the Lord for his safe arrival, not realizing that he had more reason to be grateful than a person who has encountered the danger and escaped it. The latter person had experienced moments of terror, and therefore became aware of G'd's kindness in sparing him.

David acknowledges *atah seter li mitzar* You have kept hidden distress away from me, so that I did not EVEN experience terror before being saved. Concerning the other danger, – David prays "hide my troubles from me". Should You say that in that case I would not offer thanks for being saved, David replies *roni falet tesove-veni*, You cause me to be surrounded by the grateful prayers i.e. *roney* for my escape i.e. *falet*.

According to our usual approach, the *tzar* in this case is the *yetzer hara*, evil urge. Sometimes a person comes face to face with temptation to commit a sin, and is saved from actually committing it. In such a case, he realizes that he had Divine help. Other times, G'd guides a man's path in such a way that he does not realize that he was saved from even confronting temptation. David acknowledges G'd's help in both instances, and thanks the Lord for each type of deliverance, *tesove-veni selah*, i.e. You constantly lead me around it, so that I do not even notice that I have been saved from a confrontation with my *yetzer hara*.

8. The holy spirit instructs *askilcha ve-orcha* (like the *maskil* in verse 1) that David's request NOT to have to confront his *yetzer hara*

ח אַתָּה סֵתֶר לִי מִצַּר תִּצְּרֵנִי רָנֵי פַלֵּט תְּסוֹבְבֵנִי סֶלָה:
ט אַשְׂכִּילְךָ וְאוֹרְךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ-זוּ תֵּלֵךְ אִיעֲצָה עָלֶיךָ עֵינִי:
י אַל תִּהְיוּ כְּסוּס כְּפֶרֶד אֵין הָבִין בְּמֶתֶג וָרֶסֶן עֶדְיוֹ
לִבְלוֹם בַּל קְרֹב אֵלֶיךָ:
יא רַבִּים מַכְאוֹבִים לָרָשָׁע וְהַבּוֹטֵחַ בַּיהוָה חֶסֶד יְסוֹבְבֶנּוּ:
יב שִׂמְחוּ בַיהוָה וְגִילוּ צַדִּיקִים וְהַרְנִינוּ כָּל-יִשְׁרֵי-לֵב:

and to be saved from this by G'd, is NOT the proper way. It is the task of the *yetzer hara*, evil urge, to perform the tasks assigned to him by G'd. Man's reward stems from the fact that he confronts his *yetzer hara* and triumphs over it. You are supposed to fear that he overpowers you. When you do not confront him, how can you fear him? However, I assist you in confronting him in three different ways. 1) *askilcha*, I have equipped you with intelligence to realize the futility of evil, and to choose good. Also I have enlightened you, i.e. *orcha* by giving you my Torah, so that you choose life by following its path. (Deut. 30,19,–Rashi)

Thirdly, you are constantly under warning not to follow the advice of the *yetzer hara*, i.e. *i-atza alecha eyni*. A man who has eyes in his head can notice that heaven provides any number of hints – through experiences in life of a *midah keneged midah* variety, – that one had mistakenly listened to the *yetzer hara*. When we read in Samuel I 24,5 "David's heart smote him that he had cut off Saul's robe", this is one of the Divine hints to David that he had not acted properly.

9. The holy spirit continues "– Do not say "what can I do if I failed to notice the hint from heaven", i.e. do not act like the insensitive beasts, i.e. that until you have become the victim of afflictions you had no inkling of wrongdoing.

Even those beasts have bridles, harnesses etc. which are designed to restrain them from their instinctive behaviour.

G'd warns man NOT to be like those animals who react ONLY when the bit and the bridle are applied in a painful manner. The Psalmist describes the mechanics which convert an animal's bit into a goad.

10. David responds, – that as long as man observes suffering only amongst the lawless and notices that those who trust in G'd, He surrounds with visible kindness, – he does not fall victim to the *yetzer hara*, will not act like a dumb animal.

11. To this the holy spirit retorts *simchu*, be happy with the 4 lettered name of G'd. This name guarantees that G'd can be trusted

33 *Sing forth, O you righteous, to the LORD; it is fit that the upright acclaim Him.*
2Praise the LORD with the lyre; with the ten-stringed harp sing to Him;

to pay the reward due to those who have earned it. (compare Exodus 6,2,–Rashi) At the same time, *gilu tzaddikim*, rejoice you righteous. If G'd pays the reward to the wicked, will He not certainly pay the reward due to the righteous? (Nedarim 50) The Talmud (Berachot 58) says that since G'd will not really derive pleasure from all His creatures till the Messianic age, – man too must not look for too much joy in G'd until such time. Do not be saddened because of this. To those whose heart is upright, – be of good cheer, i.e. *harninu*, since the sight of some *tzaddikim* undergoing suffering does not make them question G'd's justice. It is the task of those *yishrey lev*, upright in heart, to teach the ordinary *tzaddikim* to cultivate that kind of faith in G'd.

Psalm 33

1. We would have expected *ran-nenu tzaddikim "LASHEM"* instead of *"BASHEM"*. Besides, why does the verse begin with *tzaddikim* only to conclude with *yesharim*, i.e. a different category of people? Also, for the sake of symmetry, just as *ran-nenu* is an imperative for the *tzaddikim*, we would have expected an imperative such as *halle-lu* for the *yesharim*?

What difference does it make which kind of musical instruments are employed in rendering homage to G'd? (verse 2) Many other questions could be asked regarding the choice of words by the Psalmist here. We will answer them without first spelling out all the questions, and the reader will understand what the questions would have been.

The Psalm speaks about a generation in exile, who look at the long and bitter exile, at a time when Israel was blessed with many great Torah personalities, during the period when the Mishnah and Talmud were being composed. At such a time, the temptation to think that G'd is too far away in heaven to involve Himself in the affairs of earth, is great.

Not only that, but people will wonder why G'd created such a deficient world, and they might, G'd forbid conclude that the universe preceded the existence of G'd, as we have explained in Parshat Bereshit.

לג א רַנְּנוּ צַדִּיקִים בַּיהוָה לַיְשָׁרִים נָאוָה תְהִלָּה:
ב הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה בְּכִנּוֹר בְּנֵבֶל עָשׂוֹר זַמְּרוּ-לוֹ:

Alternately, people might think that the earth is run by the forces of Satan, – as the generation of the tower of Babel seemed to have believed, (Zohar 3,134, Moed Katan 28). In other words they would believe that *mazzal* governed the 3 principal concerns of man, i.e. his own life, his ability to have children, and his ability to provide a livelihood for himself.

In order to remove such doubts, David, with his holy spirit, wants to reinforce the faith of loyal Jews. He calls upon the *tzaddikim*, i.e. those who act in accordance with Jewish laws but do not go beyond that, to rejoice in G'd. The *yesharim* are the people who not ONLY observe Torah law, but who impose upon themselves strictures beyond the requirement of the Torah. This group is placed highest among the 7 groups of people who will enjoy eternal life in *gan eden*, after death in this world. (Midrash Tehillim 11,6 based on Psalms 140,14 and 11,7)

The *tzaddikim* can only look forward to the FUTURE when G'd's name is restored to the 4 lettered name.

rinah cannot exist as long as G'd's throne is merely *kayss* not *kisseh*, i.e. a defective throne. The word *BASHEM* then means "when the 4 lettered name of G'd has been restored".

On the other hand, the *yesharim*, thanks to their higher spiritual level, are able to praise the Lord already in our own lifetime, BECAUSE it does not occur to them to question such phenomena as *tzaddik vera lo*, why the righteous is sometimes subject to afflictions. They see in everything which transpires in life G'd's benevolent hand at work. We have learned that the greatest guarantee of Israel's eventual redemption is the exile of the *Shechinah* which needs to be redeemed. – Hence, the Jewish people will be redeemed also. (compare our commentary chapter 9 verse 10)

2. The musical instrument called *kinor* usually has 6 strings. David's harp had 10 strings. The "good" we expect in the messianic age consists of 2 aspects, symbolized by the number 6 and the number 10 respectively. (compare Bereshit Rabbah 12,6) Every time the word *toldot* appears in the Torah with the exception of Genesis 2,4 and Genesis 36,1, it is written with at least one letter *vav* missing.

This indicates that ever since heaven and earth had been created, the universe lacked 6 items, which had been removed subsequent to Adam's sin. These items are: "Adam's resplendence, deathless life, Adam's physical stature and height, the fruit of the ground, the fruit of

3sing Him a new song; play sweetly with shouts of joy.
4For the word of the LORD is right; His every deed is faithful.
5He loves what is right and just; the earth is full of the LORD's faithful care.
6By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, by the breath of His mouth, all their host.

the trees (quality). All of these will be restored when the descendant of Peretz (Genesis 36,1), i.e. the Messiah will make his appearance on earth. Our sages in the Zohar also tell us that the world suffered 10 curses as the result of Adam's sin. Jacob received a 10 part blessing to counteract these 10 curses. They will be fulfilled in the future. These 10 blessings commence with the words in Genesis 27,28 "may the Lord give you of the dew of the heaven etc.", and they conclude with the words "and those that bless you shall themselves be blessed".

Our sages also describe 10 tendons of the ram Abraham offered in lieu of Isaac as becoming the 10 strips on David's harp. (Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 31)

David says that the righteous will thank the Lord with the lute for the 6 items that will be restored in the future. Concerning fulfilment of the 10 blessings Isaac gave to Jacob, the Psalmist urges thanksgiving to the Lord by playing the 10 stringed harp. These blessings represent more than had been available to Adam in *gan eden* even before he had sinned. Therefore *zemer* is needed, i.e. a form of gratitude exceeding ordinary thanksgiving.

3. Since the *shir chadash*, new song, deals with G'd's greatness as it will manifest itself only in the future, musical instruments are needed to prepare the mind and emotions so they can receive the holy spirit which helps formulate the song. (compare Kings II 3,15 – where we see the influence of music on the mood of the prophet) The Psalmist adds *heytivu nagen bitruah* be sure to use such sounds to prevent your singing and playing from becoming frivolous.

4. Do not be surprised at my emphasizing the *yesharim* all the time. It is G'd's was as amplified in the Torah, to be *yashar*, and to counsel man to become *yashar* i.e. *ve-assita hayashar ve-hatov* etc. (Deut. 6,18), i.e. do what is good and right in the eyes of the Lord.

Our sages say that *ve-chol ma-asehu be-emunah*, refers to the reward for good deeds in the hereafter being assured. We explained in Psalms 31,20, that G'd's greatest act was this setting aside of the reward for the righteous in the hereafter. This is what David refers to

ג שִׁירוּ לוֹ שִׁיר חָדָשׁ הֵיטִיבוּ נַגֵּן בִּתְרוּעָה׃
ד כִּי־יָשָׁר דְּבַר־יְהוָה וְכָל־מַעֲשֵׂהוּ בֶּאֱמוּנָה׃
ה אֹהֵב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט חֶסֶד יְהוָה מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ׃
ו בִּדְבַר יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נַעֲשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ פִּיו כָּל צְבָאָם׃

by *ma-asehu be-emunah*, that merits are accumulated and deposited on "credit" with G'd, to be collected later, not now. (compare Eyruvin 22 on Deut. 7,11.) This is the reverse of the *yetzer hara*, evil urge, who pays off immediately to those who act on his advice.

5. One could reason that G'd had made it plain in Genesis 18,19, that "to observe the way of the Lord, to do charity and justice" is not only adequate, but results in one becoming beloved of G'd, and that Isaiah 1,17 promises redemption is response to *tzedakah* and *mishpat* charity and justice; so why stress the *yashar*, a lifestyle exceeding the norms spelled out in the Torah?

The Psalmist replies that it is true that G'd loves *tzedakah* and *mishpat*. Nonetheless, since His personal examples demonstrate that He conducts Himself in excess of these requirements, i.e. *chessed hashem mal-ah aretz*, those who wish to emulate Him and become truly close to Him, are advised to do so. The entire universe would not be able to continue to exist, were it not for the *chessed*, i.e. loving kindness, a yardstick far beyond the mere requirements of charity and justice. Since the *tzaddikim* are those whose merit keeps the universe going, it would be even better if they were all to act *lifnim mishurat hadin*, beyond the requirements of the law.

6. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer and Bereshit Rabbah 12,10, tell us that G'd created the universe without exerting or fatiguing Himself, i.e. *bidvar hashem*, merely by the word of G'd.

However, He had to extend Himself, tire Himself, when He created *tzeva-am*, their hosts, i.e. whatever is within the universe. This is so because it is written *u-veruach piv kol tzeva-am*.

This sounds strange, especially the assumption that G'd became involved in the creation of all these physical creatures. How can one impute "fatigue" to G'd? We have explained this at length in our commentary on Parshat Bereshit. In short, the 10 directives by which the world was created (Avot 5,1) were not ALL words, but the first stage was merely a thought. This is why the Torah reports *Vayomer elokim*, G'd said, nine times instead of ten times. Since a thought is something completely abstract, – it involved no effort at all. G'd did not SAY "let there be heaven and earth", as He said subsequently "let there be light".

7He heaps up the ocean waters like a mound, stores the deep in vaults.
8Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world dread Him.
9For He spoke, and it was; He commanded, and it endured.

What the Midrash meant then ***bidvar***, i.e. by the time G'd uttered a word, ***shamayim na-assu***, the heavens had already been created.

We explained in our commentary on Torah that the ***hevel piv***, the emanation from His mouth, was something which became progressively more substantive, material. This is what is meant by Isaiah 55,10–11, when he describes how G'd's directives achieve their aims in this world. "As the rain that descends on earth... and does not return there, but waters and brings forth bud, so My word that goes forth, will not return empty" (approx) but will accomplish what I have set out for it to do".

G'd's WORD calls into existence, but it does not do so always in equal fashion. Each creation is affected by G'd's word according to its own degree of being material. Although it is misleading to speak of "fatigue" in relation to G'd, the expression is used to illustrate that there are things which undergo more sophisticated processes in order to come into existence than others.

The phenomena requiring these sophisticated stages before they assume their final ***tzurah***, form, – are the ones described by the Midrash as requiring ***yegi-ah***, fatigue, tiresome effort by G'd.

Since on the first day, – nothing MATERIAL had been created yet, – such creation is considered as having occurred ***beli amal***, effortlessly. G'd had only created the potential of all that there was to come. No ***hevel piv***, i.e. emanations from His mouth were required for what G'd had created on the first day.

The Psalmist tells us that if we do not feel G'd's goodness while in exile, this is no reason to assume that the universe preceded G'd chronologically, etc. (as we have explained in connection with Nebuchadnezzar and the generation of the tower of Babel)

On the contrary, we wish to thank the Lord for the good that He will still do for us in the future. If we do this, He in turn will remove from us the foolish thinking of those who can only believe what their eyes behold, and who assume earth to have preceded the Creator. David merely explains how the ***yesh me-ayin***, something out of nothing, came into being methodically, step by step.

7. Though you may have become convinced that G'd did indeed

ז כֹּנֵס כַּנֵּד מֵי הַיָּם נֹתֵן בְּאוֹצָרוֹת תְּהוֹמוֹת:
ח יִירְאוּ מֵיְהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ מִמֶּנּוּ יָגוּרוּ כָּל-יֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל:
ט כִּי הוּא אָמַר וַיֶּהִי הוּא-צִוָּה וַיַּעֲמֹד:

create the heavens, – you might still believe that He did not create earth, seeing it is composed of murky components!

To prove that G'd did indeed CREATE earth, the Psalmist refers to the splitting of the sea when Israel marched out of Egypt, as proof that G'd had been its Creator. We read in Exodus 16,8 "the waters of the sea stood like a wall". The fact is that the waters by nature tower above earth. Our sages in Bereshit Rabbah 5,6, describe that G'd instilled fear in them. Had He not done so, they would have flooded all the continents, just as happened in the generation of Enosh, of which the prophet Amos says "He called on the waters of the oceans, and they flooded the surface of the earth, the Lord is his name". (Amos 5,8)

When we read here "He stores the waters deep in His treasury", this is merely a reminder that if not artificially restrained, the waters would flood the earth. He, the Creator, restrained the natural momentum of the waters, surrounded it with the sand, i.e. set a limit to its tendency to expand.

8. Why did G'd do so? Why did He make the waters form a wall at the time of the Exodus? So that the 7 Canaanite nations would become afraid of G'd the Creator and the Lord of Israel. Rahav said "we have heard how G'd dried out the waters of the sea of reeds on Israel's account when you left Egypt,... and our heart melted.. and everyone knows that the Lord your G'd is the G'd of heaven and earth". (Joshua 2, 10–11)

The reason G'd stores the waters in His "treasure chambers" is in order to be able to induce fear in the nations of the world. Bereshit Rabbah 5,6, commenting on the repeated statement in Amos 5,8 and 5,9, "who calls upon the waters of the oceans and spills them", explains that one reference is to what had happened during the generation of Enosh, the other to the deluge in the time of Noach. All of this proves that the command in Genesis 1,9, "let the waters concentrate in one area", was an order which restrained the NATURAL tendency of water. G'd did this in order to remind man that if not for His command, they would all be swept away.

It is a warning to be obedient to G'd's will. Failure to do so, results in G'd allowing the waters to act naturally.

9. It is clear then that only the one who created them, i.e. *amar*

10The LORD frustrates the plans of nations, brings to naught the designs of peoples.
11What the LORD plans endures forever, what He designs, for ages on end.
12Happy the nation whose God is the LORD, the people He has chosen to be His own.
13The LORD looks down from heaven; He sees all mankind.

va-yehi, is able to give commands to the ocean how to behave, i.e. *tzivah va-ya-amod*! Arresting the motion of the oceans is proof that they had been created, did not precede G'd's existence. Therefore, *yiru me-hashem kol ha-aretz*, "the earth as well as its inhabitants have come to fear the Lord" (verse 8).

10. There is still room to think that G'd runs the universe only on lines of natural law, *mazzalot*, horoscopic constellations, and a Jewish nation who grows up in exile and does not experience *nissim geluyim*, nature defying miracles such as had occurred on a daily basis when the temple had been standing, might be persuaded that this is so. David adds therefore, that such a philosophy has been discredited already, when G'd frustrated the plans of the builders of the tower of Babel who wanted the spirit of impurity to prevail on earth, and thus to forestall the existence of Israel. (see our commentary on Genesis chapter **11**)

At that time, *heyni machshevot amim*, He brought to nought the thoughts of nations that forces in the galaxies are the prime movers of man's destiny.

11. You might say, David implies, that if this is so, why does G'd not bring on the messianic age already now, for the benefit of Israel? David replies that G'd's master plan, i.e. *atzat hashem* remains in effect, unaltered, i.e. *le-olam*, and will not be cancelled even when it appears to be slow in materializing, and many generations have to be re-incarnated until they achieve the purpose for which G'd granted them life on this earth. (Yebamot 62, the Messiah cannot come until all the souls have performed their tasks within the respective bodies they have been assigned to)

12. Hail to THE nation who can call the Lord its G'd, i.e. not just any nation can place itself under the direct care of your G'd, only the nation He has chosen as His heritage. We read in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer chapter 24, that when G'd split mankind into 70 nations and assigned an angel (spiritual representative in the celestial regions) to

י יְהוָה הֵפִיר עֲצַת גּוֹיִם הֵנִיא מַחְשְׁבוֹת עַמִּים:
יא עֲצַת יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תַּעֲמֹד מַחְשְׁבוֹת לִבּוֹ לְדֹר וָדֹר:
יב אַשְׁרֵי הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו הָעָם בָּחַר לְנַחֲלָה לוֹ:
יג מִשָּׁמַיִם הִבִּיט יְהוָה רָאָה אֶת-כָּל-בְּנֵי הָאָדָם:

each one of them, Israel became G'd's share, since there was a mutual affinity in their essential qualities.

13. The Psalmist has already disposed of 2 basically wrong philosophies. 1) that the world preceded G'd chronologically. 2) that guidance of world affairs has been entrusted by G'd exclusively to agents. There remains a third philosophy to be refuted, the belief that fate is predestined due to horoscopic constellations prevailing at the time of one's birth.

Although the Talmud agrees that three major parts of one's life, i.e. life's duration, one's livelihood, and one's ability to have children ARE subject to such considerations, (Moed Katan 28) as demonstrated by Rabbah and Rav Chisdah's respective life experiences, we can explain this.

In our treatise *she-arim* on Bereshit Rabbah, we have tried to show that in view of G'd's detailed foreknowledge of all future events, He takes into consideration factors, which if not compensated for in advance, would result in catastrophes if certain persons were NOT to be born on certain dates. He also takes into considerations what would happen if certain re-incarnations were not to occur on certain dates. By taking all this into consideration BEFOREHAND, G'd guides certain people towards their eventual blissful destiny even if it involves hardships along the way, the reasons for which are unknown to the people concerned. Inversely, the same holds true when certain wicked people – because their birth or conception has been arranged by G'd to occur under a certain constellation – can obtain the reward for their good deeds in this world, saving G'd the trouble of resurrecting them, or subjecting them to purgatory before disposing of their souls permanently.

At any rate, G'd's foreknowledge enables Him to employ the horoscopic constellations to further HIS designs. David tells us, that appearances to the contrary, G'd does NOT abandon any one to *mazzal* if he qualified for the title *ben adam*. He has *hibit*, foreseen each human being that is ever to be born.

14From His dwelling-place He gazes on all the inhabitants of the earth–
15He who fashions the hearts of them all, who discerns all their doings.
16Kings are not delivered by a large force; warriors are not saved by great strength;
17horses are a false hope for deliverance; for all their great power they provide no escape.
18Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, who wait for His faithful care
19to save them from death, to sustain them in famine.
20We set our hope on the LORD, He is our help and shield;
21in Him our hearts rejoice, for in His holy name we trust.
22May we enjoy, O LORD, Your faithful care, as we have put our hope in You.

14. He supervises from His celestial residence, so that each person will be under a *mazzal* suitable to his eventual behaviour.

15. This is because He who fashions them, certainly is aware of how they will develop, and He is familiar with what each one of them is going to be doing, i.e. *meyvin et kol maasseyhem*, without influencing or interfering in their freedom to arrive at their decisions.

16. Proof that all is under supervision is, that a king may not be saved despite the fact that he has a large army at his command, nor the individual hero by his personal prowess. Gideon's 300 men overpowered a large Midianite army. (Judges chapter 6) This is proof of the former statement. Had the king of Midian trusted in the Lord, he would have been able to succeed with a small army even. Neither did Goliath prevail over David, though he was physically far superior.

17. Also, the most carefully laid plans, and the most meticulous preparation are no guarantee of success. If someone attacks the horse from below and the horse falls, its rider, instead of being able to escape on his horse, may actually be killed. In that event, the strong horse becomes its rider's deathtrap.

18. Midrash Chazit queries why our verse speaks about *eyn hashem* (singular) whereas in Psalm 34,16, we read that the *tzaddik* is supervised by both eyes of G'd.

The answer given is that if a *tzaddik* has temporary lapses, G'd in turn relaxes His supervision of him, employs only "one eye". In chapter

יד מִמְּכוֹן-שִׁבְתּוֹ הִשְׁגִּיחַ אֶל כָּל-יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ׃
טו הַיּוֹצֵר יַחַד לִבָּם הַמֵּבִין אֶל-כָּל-מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם׃
טז אֵין הַמֶּלֶךְ נוֹשָׁע בְּרָב-חָיִל גִּבּוֹר לֹא-יִנָּצֵל בְּרֹב כֹּחַ׃
יז שֶׁקֶר הַסּוּס לִתְשׁוּעָה וּבְרֹב חֵילוֹ לֹא יְמַלֵּט׃
יח הִנֵּה עֵין יְהוָה אֶל-יְרֵאָיו לַמְיַחֲלִים לְחַסְדּוֹ׃
יט לְהַצִּיל מִמָּוֶת נַפְשָׁם וּלְחַיּוֹתָם בָּרָעָב׃
כ נַפְשֵׁנוּ חִכְּתָה לַיהוָה עֶזְרֵנוּ וּמָגִנֵּנוּ הוּא׃
כא כִּי-בוֹ יִשְׂמַח לִבֵּנוּ כִּי בְשֵׁם קָדְשׁוֹ בָטָחְנוּ׃
כב יְהִי-חַסְדְּךָ יְהוָה עָלֵינוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר יִחַלְנוּ לָךְ׃

34 therefore, when Israel's actions are pleasing to the Lord, He uses both His eyes watching over them. Put another way, in chapter 34 both the attribute of mercy and the attribute of justice are at work protecting Israel, whereas in our verse only the attribute of mercy is active. For this reason, Israel is not spared afflictions, though it will survive them. However, the only *yereyim* who will be exposed to these *yissurim*, afflictions are those who wait for G'd's *chessed* in the hereafter, and do not want to consume even part of the dividends they are entitled to in this world.

19. David explains that even these *yissurim*, afflictions are of benefit to those experiencing them. G'd causes pain to their bodies, in order to save them experiencing the pain their souls would have had to experience when they come up for judgment after death. By the very *ra-av*, hunger pains they suffer, they will have enhanced eternal life, i.e. *lechayotam*.

20. We have stated at the outset that this hymn has as its subject our present exile, that the righteous should rejoice over what G'd has in store for them, even if it is delayed. Now, David, equipped with visionary powers tells us that though our physical faculties are hardly able to appreciate such long term sentiments, our souls, being free of physical restraints are able to wait joyfully in anticipation of all that G'd will do for us. However, due to the inability of our physical heart to match our spirit, we have not yet succeeded in ushering in the Messiah, and have succeeded only in removing dangers, seeing that He is our Shield and our Helper.

21. Once our heart will succeed in rejoicing in Him, i.e. His promises, and our faith will be total.

22. then G'd will not only protect us from dangers and hurt, but

34 *Of David, when he feigned madness in the presence of Abimelech, who turned him out, and he left.*
[2]*I bless the LORD at all times; praise of Him is ever in my mouth.*
[3]*I glory in the LORD; let the lowly hear it and rejoice.*
[4]*Exalt the LORD with me; let us extol His name together.*
[5]*I turned to the LORD, and He answered me; He saved me from all my terrors.*
[6]*Men look to Him and are radiant; let their faces not be downcast.*

"Your kindness will envelop us because we have waited for You hopefully".

Psalm 34

1. The king of Gat in David's time was called Achish, not Avimelech. (Samuel I 21,11) If the Psalmist refers to David having disguised himself before "Avimelech", i.e. an ancestor of Achish, this was part of David disguising himself. According to Yalkut Shimoni, Samuel, item 131, it was totally foolish for David to have fled to Achish, Goliath's brother, especially since this was shortly after David had slain Goliath.

At G'd's suggestion, David acted as if he were crazy. He wrote on the door of the king's palace that the king owed him a sum of money, and that the king's wife also owed him money. Since Achish already had a daughter who was insane, he reacted by expelling David, saying "I have no shortage of crazy people around me". (Samuel i.e. 21,16)

Since David, when he left the city of Gat walked, i.e. *vayelech*, in a normal fashion, the king might have been alerted to the fact that David had only been putting on an act. It is for the fact that the king did not realize this, that David thanks G'd especially in this hymn.

2. Since David had made it a practice to praise the Lord constantly, he asks rhetorically, "how can I bless the Lord in a way which indicates that this is praise for a particular event"?

3. David decides that as distinct from his custom of offering nightly prayers of praise to the Lord, this event requires a PUBLIC acknowledgment. Therefore, *yish-me-u anavim ve-yismachu*, let the humble hear and rejoice, i.e. I will recite my thanksgiving prayer in public.

4. David invites his listeners to declare G'd's greatness together

לד א לְדָוִד בְּשַׁנּוֹתוֹ אֶת-טַעְמוֹ לִפְנֵי אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וַיְגָרְשֵׁהוּ וַיֵּלַךְ:

ב אֲבָרְכָה אֶת יְהוָה בְּכָל עֵת תָּמִיד תְּהִלָּתוֹ בְּפִי:

ג בַּיהוָה תִּתְהַלֵּל נַפְשִׁי יִשְׁמְעוּ עֲנָוִים וְיִשְׂמָחוּ:

ד גַּדְּלוּ לַיהוָה אִתִּי וּנְרוֹמְמָה שְׁמוֹ יַחְדָּו:

ה דָּרַשְׁתִּי אֶת יְהוָה וְעָנָנִי וּמִכָּל-מְגוּרוֹתַי הִצִּלָנִי:

ו הִבִּיטוּ אֵלָיו וְנָהָרוּ וּפְנֵיהֶם אַל-יֵחְפָּרוּ:

with him, since, just as he has been the recipient of G'd's help, so have they, since the fact that David remained alive and well is of value to the whole nation. This is in contrast to what both David's body and his spirit had concluded, each in his own way, namely that the miracle had occurred for the sake of David's body or spirit respectively. The fact is however, that G'd works miracles for the sake of His name. Therefore, both spirit and body join by saying "let US exalt His name together". This is to occur in public, as we know from Psalm 107,32. This expression of gratitude is especially called for, since to save man from the designs of man, i.e. a free willed individual without interfering with either party's freedom of choice is especially difficult for G'd. G'd personally had engineered this, without the use of a medium such as an angel. Therefore David calls out *gadelu lashem!*, declare the greatness of G'd! 34,5.

In the event that someone were to say "surely it was not G'd Himself who accomplished this, but David's disguise as an insane person!", David replies *darashti et hashem*, I asked G'd's advice! Midrash Socher Tov on our verse explains that David had complimented G'd on the fact that everything He had created in this universe had its use. However, David had failed to perceive the use of insanity. G'd told him at that time that the time would come when he would pray and ask to be granted some insanity. This is why David cautions the onlookers NOT to credit insanity with his escape, but the conversation he had had with G'd concerning the useful function of insanity.

In other words, G'd has been able to save me from all my problems – but in this case He employed the venue of insanity, i.e. *shtut* which ON ITS OWN would not have sufficed.

6. The holy spirit re-inforces this argument by saying that *hibitu elav venaharu*, they had looked at him and had become enlightened. All the entourage of Achish who had looked at David, saw in him the

7Here was a lowly man who called, and the LORD listened, and delivered him from all his troubles.
8The angel of the LORD camps around those who fear Him and rescues them.
9Taste and see how good the LORD is; happy the man who takes refuge in Him!
10Fear the LORD, you His consecrated ones, for those who fear Him lack nothing.
11Lions have been reduced to starvation, but those who turn to the LORD shall not lack any good.

slayer of Goliath, the king's brother. They told the king so. Only the king saw in him a harmless but crazy person. Is it possible that those people, seeing the king shamed them *ufneyhem al yechparu*, would not at least insist on putting David in protective custody for a while?

7. Yet, none of this occurred. This *ani*, poor man, (David) called out and G'd listened and saved him from all his troubles. G'd did this personally. (compare Proverbs 22,22–23, that G'd takes up the quarrels the *ani*, poor man is involved in)

8. Do not say that He sent an angel, as He had done in the case of Jacob (Genesis 32,2). It is true that the righteous is surrounded by G'd's angels, – but these angels are there only as a mark of honour for the righteous, as a compliment. They are not charged with the task of protecting or rescuing the righteous. We see this from the example of Joseph, who had been met by 3 angels on his way to find his brothers, yet not one of them had lifted a finger to save him from dangers. (Genesis 37,16, Bereshit Rabbah 84)

Neither had the angels who surrounded Jacob made a move to save Jacob from Esau (see above quote).

When Jacob had divided his camp to save himself or part of his camp from a possible attack by Esau, the Torah says *vehu avar lifneyhem* "and He walked in front of them", i.e. not the angels. (Genesis 33,3 Bereshit Rabbah 77,7.) The Midrash there makes G'd Himself the subject of the word "and he". G'd had said "I will be the enemy of those who are your enemies" (Exodus 23,20) etc. Whenever we find a statement such as the one in Exodus 23,23, describing angels in what appears like a protective posture, or for example Numbers 20,16, where the angel appears as if he had accomplished the rescue, this only means that the rescue had been effected by G'd already earlier, and only now become evident, i.e. when Israel found itself accompanied by an angel or angels.

Regarding Numbers 20,16, we have a tradition that the "angel" the

ז זֶה עָנִי קָרָא וַיהוָה שָׁמֵעַ וּמִכָּל-צָרוֹתָיו הוֹשִׁיעוֹ:
ח חֹנֶה מַלְאַךְ-יְהוָה סָבִיב לִירֵאָיו וַיְחַלְּצֵם:
ט טַעֲמוּ וּרְאוּ כִּי-טוֹב יְהוָה אַשְׁרֵי הַגֶּבֶר יֶחֱסֶה-בּוֹ:
י יְראוּ אֶת-יְהוָה קְדֹשָׁיו כִּי אֵין מַחְסוֹר לִירֵאָיו:
יא כְּפִירִים רָשׁוּ וְרָעֵבוּ וְדֹרְשֵׁי יְהוָה לֹא-יַחְסְרוּ כָל-טוֹב:

Torah describes there is in reality Moses, who had been G'd's instrument for part of the Exodus. (compare Ibn Ezra and more specifically Midrash Hagadol)

9. David is inspired and says "try it for yourselves and you will see that G'd is good". He means G'd Himself, as distinct from the angel. The definition "good" applies only to G'd Himself, not to an angel. Truly happy is only he who makes G'd Himself his refuge. On the contrary, those who trust only in angels deserve to be cursed not hailed, ***ashrey***! Anyone who believes in angels possessing independent powers, sins. The function of an angel accompanying you is strictly a complimentary one. Possibly, verse 9 answers the implicit question that if G'd is so concerned with the poor man, the ***ani***, that He personally saves him from dangers, why does He not make him economically independent?

David answers that G'd prefers the poor man to have to put his trust in Him, i.e. ***yechesseh bo***, – rather than in his new found economic wealth.

10. There is another condition to be met before the ***any-im*** can receive all that they lack. ***yiru et hashem***, fear the Lord, – and not the punishment that might follow if you do not observe His commandments. If He will do good for you, this is because He is great, not because He responds to your serving Him for the sake of the good He can bestow upon you. Secondly, you must be careful to avoid sinning, but you must put your trust in Him while on the way to qualifying for the title ***kedoshav***, His holy ones. Those who serve the Lord for the sake of the material reward, will find Him very exacting, whereas those who serve Him because He is Hashem, will find that He will look after those concerns that ordinary mortals have to work for very hard, i.e. ***eyn machsor li-reav***.

11. This is G'd's way. Those who are demanding of him, He in turn is demanding of; those who strive to be close to Him, – He will be good with.

The former are like the young lions who cry out to G'd to still their

[12]Come, my sons, listen to me; I will teach you what it is to fear the LORD.
[13]Who is the man who is eager for life, who desires years of good fortune?

hunger, – *rashu, ra-evu*, they have become poor and hungry; the latter i.e. *dorshey hashem* those who genuinely seek out the Lord, will not want for any good thing. Therefore David advises us to do likewise.

The Talmud Kiddushin 82, relates that Rabbi Shimon ben Eleazar said that he had never seen a mature lion having to carry loads. The implication is that the animals are provided for by G'd without having to ask for His help. If nonetheless, we observe YOUNG lions, i.e. *kefirim* sometimes crying out for food, the promise that the *dorshay hashem* those who really seek to become close to Hashem will not want for anything good is a great blessing.

Possibly, – David wants to teach us the difference between the POWER of the individual and that of the community, or the difference between a person who has serene faith, i.e. *boteach*, and the one who knows that his help comes from G'd, but who prays and implores G'd, not having the serenity to await G'd's help calmly.

The individual poor man (verse 7) who also called upon G'd, – not only because of his personal troubles, will experience all G'd's goodness. He will not only be saved from the present *tzarah*, trouble, but from all troubles, *mikol tzarotav*.

G'd will listen to him, though He has already saved him from his troubles. (set the salvation in motion) When there are many G'd fearing people, (verse 8), they will be surrounded by angels, as a compliment, even though they have not yet called upon G'd to help them, and G'd will rescue them.

Verse 9 emphasizes that G'd is the source of the salvation, not the angel. The *yereyim*, G'd fearing people mentioned in verse 10, as distinct from *ohavim*, people who love G'd, i.e. *kedoshav*, His holy ones, are those who BECAUSE they are constantly afraid of committing a sin, will not lack anything, whereas the same promise is not made to the *ohavim* who because they are so full of love do not always notice that they may fail to perform some commandments.

Therefore, it is advisable EVEN for the community to engage in prayer for their needs. Although G'd would rescue them from their problems also without prayer, prayer is needed so that they should not be deprived of receiving ALL good. David illustrates this by the fact that even young lions call out to G'd.

יב לְכוּ-בָנִים שִׁמְעוּ לִי יִרְאַת יְהוָה אֲלַמֶּדְכֶם:
יג מִי-הָאִישׁ הֶחָפֵץ חַיִּים אֹהֵב יָמִים לִרְאוֹת טוֹב:

12. David's demands on the Jewish personality are so great that some people remonstrate with him saying that it is normal to worry about the need of one's family, and to want to enjoy some of the comforts of life. David addresses those people and calls them *banim*, i.e. junior *anashim*, as yet immature men.

He wants to teach them HOW to achieve the kind of personality growth that he suggests as his ideal. *lechu*, go!, i.e. depart from the childish attitudes of *banim*, immature children who love the comforts of this transient life. I will teach you to acquire true reverence for G'd.

13. Man must first appreciate what is TRUE life. There is no one who does not want life. If someone who has toiled in order to acquire the riches this world has to offer were to be told convincingly that he would die on the morrow, would he not DESPISE his toil for the sake of money? It is only his greed for money which misled him into thinking that life on this planet is the real thing! He does not realize that true life is in the hereafter, and that the only reason he has been given life on this planet is to acquire the right to life in the hereafter.

Our Rabbis have said: "What must a man do in order to live? – He must die" (Tamid 32), i.e. he must "kill" himself, his *chomer*, the physical part of himself by refining his body through service to the Lord. He must spend his life on earth serving G'd, so that even the time spent on the mundane aspects of life acquires a holiness, becomes sublimated. The Zohar comments on Genesis 47,29 that "the days of Israel approached to die", and on Kings I,2,1 "the days of David approached to die", that these people were granted the ability to see the good in store for them after death in the world to come before they had actually departed this life. Our sages in Bereshit Rabbah 62,2 interpreting Proverbs 31,25 describe this as "she smiled towards the last day".

This is what David had in mind when he said "who is the man who desires life?" Surely, this applies to EVERY person. Does not everyone love days in order to see the good, i.e. the truly good life in the hereafter? David does not refer to the transient days in this world. We must understand the line *vayikrevu yemey yisrael* (Genesis 47,29) as meaning "the REAL days of Israel approached", i.e. his real life in the hereafter.

If someone spends his life chasing worldly goods, he does not

14*Guard your tongue from evil, your lips from deceitful speech.*
15*Shun evil and do good, seek amity and pursue it.*
16*The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, His ears attentive to their cry.*
17*The face of the LORD is set against evildoers, to erase their names from the earth.*
18*They cry out, and the LORD hears, and saves them from all their troubles.*

display a wish for life, *chafetz chayim*, but a death wish. He will find out when he dies, that those days he had "lived" on earth had not really been "his days", since they evaporated in *hevel*, nothingness. A person who appreciates all this has no difficulty in adopting the path of life which David suggests. At least this is the way he has to act in his relationship with G'd.

14. David also instructs us to conduct ourselves in our relationship with our fellow man. First of all, one must restrain one's tongue from speaking evil. All these instructions, though they are uttered by the mouth of David, are actually inspired by the *ruach hakodesh*, holy spirit. David is acting only as the messenger of the holy spirit.

The subject here is not ordinary evil gossip, but even the repeating of well known factual stories, commonly known. One must not develop the habit of discussing such matters even *sefatecha medabber mirmah*, if only from your lips outward, i.e. that those words do not even reflect the thinking of your heart.

15. Should you ACTUALLY have done harm to your fellow man, – remove yourself from doing so, reverse yourself and do good to him instead.

By doing so, *bakesh shalom*, you will be perceived as seeking peace. The Talmud Shabbat 10, states, that if one gives bread to a young child, one has to inform the child's mother (in some way), since such an act promotes peace and harmony between the donor and the family of the child. The assumption is that the respective families had quarrelled previously. If after such an overture at reconciliation, the other party refuses, – so that peace and harmony seem to flee from you, *rodfeyhu*, pursue it! This is the only time that pursuit is a positive characteristic.

16. We have stated in chapter 33,18, that the expression *eyney hashem*, i.e. BOTH eyes of G'd looking after Israel's concerns actively, applies to periods when the Jewish people perform the

יד נְצֹר לְשׁוֹנְךָ מֵרָע וּשְׂפָתֶיךָ מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה:
טו סוּר מֵרָע וַעֲשֵׂה-טוֹב בַּקֵּשׁ שָׁלוֹם וְרָדְפֵהוּ:
טז עֵינֵי יְהוָה אֶל-צַדִּיקִים וְאָזְנָיו אֶל-שַׁוְעָתָם:
יז פְּנֵי יְהוָה בְּעֹשֵׂי רָע לְהַכְרִית מֵאֶרֶץ זִכְרָם:
יח צָעֲקוּ וַיהוָה שָׁמֵעַ וּמִכָּל-צָרוֹתָם הִצִּילָם:

commandments wholeheartedly. When Israel does not live up to such a standard, only the attitude of mercy is active on its behalf, i.e. *eyn hashem*, one of G'd's eyes. In the scenario where Israel lives up to G'd's expectations, the *midat hadin*, attribute of justice also looks after us. Concerning this latter scenario, David says in verse 18 *tza-aku, ve-hashem shomeya*, they cried out AND G'd listens, i.e. the letter *vav*, and, includes the attribute of justice of G'd. (compare Bereshit Rabbah 55,4)

Why are the *ossey ra*, the doers of evil, bracketed between two groups of *tzaddikim*, i.e. the ones in verse 16 and the ones in verse 18? David first wants to demonstrate that whereas *tzaddikim* succeed in converting the *midat hadin*, attribute of justice into making it act like the *midat harachamim* the attribute of mercy, the wicked, i.e. the *ossey ra* achieve the very opposite. In verse 18, David points out another favour G'd does for the *tzaddikim*. Although He has already seen their problem, tuned in to their eventual pleas, i.e. has put in motion their salvation, when they do call out, G'd takes time out to listen to their prayers. The words *oznav el shav-atam* mean, that G'd responded with His ears to an as yet unformulated *shav-ah* outcry.

17. David underlines the contrast between G'd's behaviour towards the *tzaddik*, and His reaction to the *ossey ra*.

18. This verse may well be the answer to someone who asks why in 33, 18–19, G'd has saved the *yereyim* only from death rather than from all their troubles *kol tzarotam*. The answer, as we have stated, lies in the fact that in this chapter the *tzaddikim* referred to are on a much higher level than those *yereyim* in chapter 33,18, – who fear the Lord because they are afraid of punishment. Or, – at a time when there are many *ossey ra*, evil doers – as per verse 17 – the *tzaddikim* by contrast become totally pious when they observe the fate being meted out to the *ossey ra*.

19. In verse 7, the Psalmist had declared that G'd responds to the *ani*, the poor, – saving him from all his troubles. Here, David confirms that G'd is indeed *karov*, near to such a person. However, there is a

19*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; those crushed*
in spirit He delivers.
20*Though the misfortunes of the righteous be many, the*
LORD will save him from them all,
21*Keeping all his bones intact, not one of them being*
broken.
22*One misfortune is the deathblow of the wicked; the*
foes of the righteous shall be ruined.
23*The LORD redeems the life of His servants; all who*
take refuge in Him shall not be ruined.

35 *Of David.*
O LORD, strive with my adversaries, give battle to my
foes,
2*take up shield and buckler, and come to my defense;*

category of person who is even more despondent than the *ani*, namely the *dak-ey ruach*, the broken spirited one. Such a person is helped by G'd even before he calls, i.e. *yoshia*. He will save such a contrite spirit. (The reason such a person may not have called upon G'd to save him, is his very contrition, his feeling of being unworthy)

20. Who is this *dak-eh ruach*? He is the person who has experienced many ills without having become shaken in his faith, in his righteousness. He deserves G'd's direct help, without the intermediary, the angel.

21. G'd will recognize the calibre of such faith. Not even a single one of his bones will disintegrate after death. His skeleton will remain intact pending the re-surrection. This in spite of the fact that even a certain small bone would suffice for G'd to reconstruct the whole body at that time. (compare Bereshit Rabbah 28,3)

An example in the Talmud of the statement made here is Rabbi Achai son of Rabbi Yoshiah in Shabbat, 152.

22. Although David understands why the *tzaddikim* are subjected to *rabot ra-ot*, many ills, from all of which G'd eventually saves them, he wants to know why the wicked experience good instead of *temotet rasha*, that You kill the wicked?

He should die, because he has caused his own death with his deeds.

Besides, why should he be allowed to witness the trouble of the *tzaddik*? The *soney tzaddik*, the ones who hate the righteous

יט קָרוֹב יְהוָה לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי-לֵב וְאֶת-דַּכְּאֵי רוּחַ יוֹשִׁיעַ׃
כ רַבּוֹת רָעוֹת צַדִּיק וּמִכֻּלָּם יַצִּילֶנּוּ יְהוָה׃
כא שֹׁמֵר כָּל-עַצְמוֹתָיו אַחַת מֵהֵנָּה לֹא נִשְׁבָּרָה יֵאָשֵׁמוּ׃
כב תְּמוֹתֵת רָשָׁע רָעָה וְשֹׂנְאֵי צַדִּיק יֶאְשָׁמוּ׃
כג פּוֹדֶה יְהוָה נֶפֶשׁ עֲבָדָיו וְלֹא יֶאְשְׁמוּ כָּל הַחוֹסִים בּוֹ׃

לה

א לְדָוִד רִיבָה יְהוָה אֶת-יְרִיבַי לְחַם אֶת לֹחֲמָי׃
ג הַחֲזֵק מָגֵן וְצִנָּה וְקוּמָה בְּעֶזְרָתִי׃

should be destroyed when they watch the *tzaddik* being rescued from all his problems, – whereas it is their turn to become victims, *yeshamu*!

23. However, what G'd does is that He redeems the SOUL of His servants Israel from troubles by NOT helping the *dak-ey ruach* (the most faithful) in this world, by leaving them to suffer the afflictions of poverty. Concerning the question why the wicked fare well, why G'd does not kill them, it is so that all those who trust in Him will not become guilty at all, i.e. so that He can subtract all their guilt of this life so that they die completely innocent and proceed to the hereafter without delay. This is achieved by their observing the way the wicked enjoy this life without their questioning G'd's ways.

Psalm 35

1. David had two types of enemies. One group contented itself with maligning him, whereas the other group fought against him or pursued him in order to fight against him. He was therefore "burned by two fires". He said to himself "woe unto me if I appeal to the attribute of justice against my enemies, for the attribute of justice will kill them and their deaths will have been caused by me". Since I know (Proverbs 17,26) *gam anosh latzadik lo tov* that it is not good for the righteous to have been the cause of someone else's punishment, and my soul would become guilt ridden, I cannot pray for that to happen.

On the other hand, I cannot simply let them carry out their designs, else they will kill me, and there seems to be no third alternative. I cannot even ask G'd to deny them the chance to do evil, since G'd does not interfere with man's freedom of choice. Therefore, the Psalmist says: "for David – strive o Lord my strife!", i.e. concerning David's dilemma, I want *hashem* i.e. the attribute of mercy to take up my fight, my defence against those who malign me with harsh words, i.e. *riv*. Even the attribute of mercy is capable of *lochem* warring against them without killing them.

3ready the spear and javelin against my pursuers; tell me, "I am your deliverance."
4Let those who seek my life be frustrated and put to shame; let those who plan to harm me fall back in disgrace.
5Let them be as chaff in the wind, the LORD's angel driving them on.
6Let their path be dark and slippery, with the LORD's angel in pursuit.
7For without cause they hid a net to trap me; without cause they dug a pit for me.
8Let disaster overtake them unawares; let the net they hid catch them; let them fall into it when disaster [strikes].

2. How can this be done in practice? Since You cannot deny them freedom of action without cancelling the whole system of reward and punishment, provide me with adequate defence, i.e. shields etc. so that after they have exhausted themselves in their aggressive actions against me, You will still protect me and they will see themselves face both the defensive armament such as *magen*, shield, and a dangerous defensive armament such as a spiked shield *tzinah*. This should make them sufficiently afraid to desist from pursuing me.

3. If this does not prove sufficient, draw out a spear, a bigger *tzinah*, and block, i.e. *segor* their approach, when they see these weapons. So that my own soul will not become disgusted with me for causing Your anger at them, tell my soul (David addresses the *ruach hakodesh*) that I G'd am your salvation", i.e. You are acting defensively on my behalf, and that I am NOT the cause of your enemies' death or injury.

4. Since I do not desire their collapse, only the shame and disgrace of those who seek my death, I want them to see that G'd is helping me. He refers to pursuers such as Saul. This is what David did when he found Saul, and Saul's advisers were shamed when they saw that David could have killed Saul and did not.

5. We read in Isaiah 41,16, "scatter them, let the wind carry them away". Our sages in Yalkut Shimoni on that verse say that the wheat and the straw argued amongst themselves as to their relative importance. Wheat argued that the field had only been sown for its sake, whereas straw argued that it had been sowed for its sake. Wheat told straw that when harvest time would arrive straw would

ג וְהָרֵק חֲנִית וּסְגוֹר לִקְרַאת רֹדְפָי אֱמֹר לְנַפְשִׁי
יְשׁוּעָתֵךְ אָנִי׃
ד יֵבֹשׁוּ וְיִכָּלְמוּ מְבַקְשֵׁי נַפְשִׁי יִסֹּגוּ אָחוֹר וְיַחְפְּרוּ
חֹשְׁבֵי רָעָתִי׃
ה יִהְיוּ כְמֹץ לִפְנֵי-רוּחַ וּמַלְאַךְ יְהוָה דֹּחֶה׃
ו יְהִי-דַרְכָּם חֹשֶׁךְ וַחֲלַקְלַקּוֹת וּמַלְאַךְ יְהוָה רֹדְפָם׃
ז כִּי-חִנָּם טָמְנוּ-לִי שַׁחַת רִשְׁתָּם חִנָּם חָפְרוּ לְנַפְשִׁי׃
ח תְּבוֹאֵהוּ שׁוֹאָה לֹא יֵדָע וְרִשְׁתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר-טָמַן תִּלְכְּדוֹ
בְּשׁוֹאָה יִפָּל-בָּהּ׃

see for whose sake the field had been planted. When the harvest was over, the farmer took the straw and the hay and burned it, whereas he arranged the wheat carefully in piles. At that time everyone kissed the wheat. So far the Yalkut.

The parable applies to the relative merits of Israel and the nations of the world. The latter claimed that the world had been created for their sake. Israel told the nations that once the Messiah would arrive, we would all see for whose sake the world (mankind) had been created. At that time the nations will become like "chaff from the summer threshing grounds". (Daniel, 2,35.)

This is exactly what Isaiah had referred to in Isaiah 41,16.

David's enemies behaved like the straw in the parable, believing themselves to be superior to him. David asks that when they observe how G'd protects him, that they should become ashamed of their attitudes. The angel of G'd, *malach hashem doche*, will thrust them away, – i.e. will NOT kill them, but just scatter them.

6. If, in spite of seeing how You help me, they persist in their ways, then the angel of G'd may pursue them not just scatter them. They will then have to suffer afflictions which will force them to desist from persecuting me. David does not ask for ACTUAL afflictions, merely that they be made to feel pursued.

7–8. One could query why David insists that an angel of G'd should pursue Saul and his men precisely when they are on the *darkam choshech*, dark paths, instead of some other disaster befalling them. David replies that unless the problems they encounter will point directly to G'd doing this to them because of what they had been doing to David, any other kind of disaster befalling them would not help. After all, they had kept pursuing him despite the fact that

[9]*Then shall I exult in the LORD, rejoice in His deliverance.*
[10]*All my bones shall say, "LORD, who is like You? You save the poor from one stronger than he, the poor and needy from his despoiler."*
[11]*Malicious witnesses appear who question me about things I do not know.*

David had cut off Saul's mantle instead of his head, and had taken his spear instead of piercing him with it. (compare Samuel I 24,4 and 26,1)

They would think that such disasters strike them *chinam*, without cause, since they do not view what they are doing to me as a sin! If only ordinary disaster befalls them, *lo yeda* he will not know the reason why. Therefore his own snare has to trap him, so that from the *midah keneged midah* nature of the disaster, i.e. the angel PURSUING him, he will appreciate WHY he is being subjected to such treatment by G'd.

9. On Kings I, 22,21 "the spirit came forward and volunteered to seduce Achav", our sages in Chagigah 15 and Sanhedrin 46 offer two comments.

The "spirit" was the spirit of the deceased Navot (whom Achav had framed and executed). He wanted Achav to be smitten in Yavesh Gilead because he had had him stoned. G'd permitted this, but since He does not permit "lies" in His proximity, Navot's spirit was told *tze*, i.e. expelled. The reason G'd permitted the seduction, ensuring Achav would not have any life in the hereafter was that he had been the cause of someone else being punished, and as such could not ever enjoy the proximity of G'd's domain.

We also know from Chagigah 15, that G'd feels the pain of the wicked, even, so that Rabbi Meir's Torah, i.e. the one he had taught in the name of the heretic Rabbi Elisha ben Avuyah was quoted in his name after he had suffered the anguish of being ignored. Since G'd feels the pain of the wicked, how much more so is He responsive to the pain of the righteous! (compare the parable about the twin brothers in the Talmud there.)

David refers to two requests he had made. A) He did not want to have to kill his enemies. B) G'd should not apply the attribute of justice against them and kill them, but only inflict the kind of disaster on them that would make them realize why they were being punished. He wanted them to repent, i.e. *tagil nafshi bashem*, i.e. my soul will be able to rejoice that no one has been killed on my account.

ט וְנַפְשִׁי תָּגִיל בַּיהוָה תָּשִׂישׂ בִּישׁוּעָתוֹ׃
י כָּל עַצְמוֹתַי תֹּאמַרְנָה יְהוָה מִי כָמוֹךָ מַצִּיל עָנִי מֵחָזָק
מִמֶּנּוּ וְעָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן מִגֹּזְלוֹ׃
יא יְקוּמוּן עֵדֵי חָמָס אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדַעְתִּי יִשְׁאָלוּנִי׃

Tassis biyeshuati, it can jubilate that G'd did not need to feel the pain of the death of the wicked.

10. Also my body will be happy, every one of my bones which performs Your commandments. Had my hand been involved in killing my enemies, this would have affected *kol atzmotai*, all my bones. Therefore, all my bones are happy that I did not have to kill, and they all acknowledge G'd's grace. Whenever I am subject to the seductive powers of my *yetzer hara*, evil urge, all my bones are involved, and my *yetzer hatov* is isolated, has to stand up against all parts of my body. This is what David means when he says *matzil ani*, He saves my solitary *yetzer hatov*, good urge *mechazak mimenu* from someone stronger, i.e. the forces of the *yetzer hara* and his allies. (compare Berachot 61, Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi)

Since the *yetzer hara* is part of man ever since his birth, i.e. an enemy from within, he is considered *chazak*, stronger. There are no more dangerous enemies than those within one's own house, since one cannot escape from them. (Yalkut Shimoni on Psalms item 723, points out that whereas when people share a home, they grow to like each other after a while, this is not the case with the *yetzer hara* who can entrap you even if he has lived within you for 80 years) There is no greater robber! i.e. *gozlo* than he who robs the *ani ve-evyon*, the poor and the destitute, i.e. my *yetzer hatov*.

Verse 9–10 could be understood thus. I am not concerned about my soul, says David, since at worst my enemy can destroy my body. My soul *tagil bashem* would still be able to rejoice with the Lord. (in the hereafter) However, since I desire that ALL my bones should serve the Lord and proclaim His uniqueness, i.e. *tomarnah hashem mi chamocha*, I pray that my body be saved! Should I be killed, then, if any of my bones had not yet been employed in serving You, it would miss its chance forever.

11. So far David had spoken about those who are actively engaged in fighting him,. Now he speaks about those who do not actually lift a hand against him, but who malign him and accuse him of all kinds of things, such as that he owed money. These people are extremely ungrateful. Had he faced them in open Court, they would

[12]They repay me evil for good, [seeking] my bereavement.
[13]Yet, when they were ill, my dress was sackcloth, I kept a fast– may what I prayed for happen to me!
[14]I walked about as though it were my friend or my brother; I was bowed with gloom, like one mourning for his mother.
[15]But when I stumble, they gleefully gather; wretches gather against me, I know not why; they tear at me without end.
[16]With impious, mocking grimace they gnash their teeth at me.
[17]O Lord, how long will You look on? Rescue me from their attacks, my precious life, from the lions,

not have dared testify against David. They therefore chose to accuse me of matters which I could not have possibly known about, such as claiming that my father's lands had been pledged for loans he had received while he had still been alive.

12. These people repay the favours I have done them with evil, so that those favours which I had considered as my soul's children, my dividends, will be left bereaved *shechol*, when I die.

13. David explains that his adversaries repaid him with evil for good. If one of them had been sick, David had worn sackcloth to show his sympathy, and pray for his recovery; he had fasted etc.

His fasting had not been of the kind a soldier engages in before battle in order to secure G'd's help on the battlefield. That fasting is not really an affliction, since one expects victory in return for the fast. I, however, says David, have afflicted myself to such an extent that my prayer on their behalf was answered before I even uttered it, i.e. *tefilati al cheyki tashuv*, while my prayer was still in my bosom it returns already.

14. I reacted to their problems as if they had been my closest friends or brother, bowed down like someone mourning his mother.

15. In return, they rejoiced when I reeled, i.e. *betzal-i*. They gathered against me. The Talmud Baba Metzia 59 and Sanhedrin 107, commenting on the words *kar-u velo damu* in our verse says, that David said to G'd "You are well aware that if my enemies were to tear my flesh from me, my blood would not run to the ground". This means that David had afflicted himself to such an extent that he had no blood left. When they accused David of adultery, sarcastically enquiring what the penalty is for such a sin, David had responded

יב יְשַׁלְּמוּנִי רָעָה תַּחַת טוֹבָה שְׁכוֹל לְנַפְשִׁי:
יג וַאֲנִי בַּחֲלוֹתָם לְבוּשִׁי שָׂק עִנִּיתִי בַצּוֹם נַפְשִׁי
וּתְפִלָּתִי עַל-חֵיקִי תָּשׁוּב:
יד כְּרֵעַ כְּאָח-לִי הִתְהַלָּכְתִּי כַּאֲבֶל-אֵם קֹדֵר שַׁחוֹתִי:
טו וּבְצַלְעִי שָׂמְחוּ וְנֵאָסָפוּ נֵאָסְפוּ עָלַי נֵכִים וְלֹא יָדָעְתִּי
קָרְעוּ וְלֹא-דָמּוּ:
טז בְּחַנְפֵי לַעֲגֵי חָרֹק עָלַי שִׁנֵּימוֹ:
יז אֲדֹנָי כַּמָּה תִרְאֶה הָשִׁיבָה נַפְשִׁי מִשֹּׁאֵיהֶם מִכְּפִירִים
יְחִידָתִי:
יח אוֹדְךָ בְּקָהָל רָב בְּעַם עָצוּם אֲהַלְלֶךָּ:

that the penalty is hanging – but that one's share in the hereafter is preserved, contrary to those who are guilty of publicly shaming someone.

Since the Talmud chooses to interpret the word *damu* as meaning "blood" rather than "silence", one can interpret the verse in a different way. David says "look how evil is their heart. When I was stumbling, i.e. when I slept with Bat Sheva, they rejoiced and engaged in illicit sex. Afterwards, they assembled and accused me, posturing as *nechim*, stricken ones, as if concerned about the terrible fate that might befall me due to my sin, predicting I would suffer a great demotion".

All the while I had been unaware that all this had been planned by them in order to shame and insult me publicly. I was so upset, as if they had torn my flesh, and the only difference between actually tearing my flesh and the symbolic action, was the fact that my blood did not flow.

16. *ma-og* describes the circle in which David's adversaries were seated. (compare Taanit 19 *ag ma-og*) David describes the hypocritical fawning of these people, who were trying to hide their real purpose, namely to insult him. They did this by saying sarcastically that there was really no need for the assembly to judge the issue of David and Bat Sheva, seeing Bat Sheva had been divorced at the time.

Even before leaving the assembly, they already gnashed their teeth at David, i.e. not even their hypocritical flattery lasted for any time at all. They could not even wait to leave the assembly to reveal the true nature of their hatred.

18that I may praise You in great congregation, acclaim
You in a mighty throng.
19Let not my treacherous enemies rejoice over me, or
those who hate me without reason wink their eyes.
20For they do not offer amity, but devise fraudulent
schemes against harmless folk.
21They open wide their mouths at me, saying, "aha, aha,
we have seen it!"
22You have seen it, O LORD; do not hold aloof!
O Lord, be not far from me!
23Wake, rouse Yourself for my cause, for my claim, O my
God and my Lord!

17. The roaring young lions wanting prey, are hyperbole for the negative forces created by man's sins, which assume a posture constantly threatening him. Also, as stated often, even the *tzaddik* must not become the instrument of someone else's punishment. (Proverbs 17,26) David knew his enemies deserved severe punishment, and he was afraid that he might become G'd's agent in administering this punishment. At the same time he was afraid that the sins he had committed with Bat Sheva, and the death of Uriah the Hittite at the hands of the Beney Ammon which had been at his instigation, had let loose negative forces against him which would tear away at his life.

Therefore, he pleaded with G'd concerning both matters. He says that surely G'd is aware of other sins of his adversaries, hence if they get punished they should not get punished on account of what they had done or had planned to do against him. Secondly, the *kefirim yechidati*, David's personal problems with the negative forces he had created, i.e. *yechidati* and which seem to be attacking him like roaring lions, *hashivah nafshi*, rescue my soul o Lord!

18. The reason I ask to be spared is not in order to enjoy the gratifications this life has to offer, but to proclaim my thanks to You publicly. Halachically, such thanksgiving requires a quorum of 10 adult males including 2 scholars. (Berachot 54) David promises *be-am atzum*, i.e. I will assemble a far larger number of people than the minimum quorum, when I give thanks for my deliverance.

19. I ask only to be saved, not to be granted atonement and simultaneous death as an innocent person. The reason I do not do so is because my death would be misinterpreted by my enemies as proof of my guilt, and I would cause them to sin further. This joy would be based on lies, those who hate me for no reason and do not

ט אַל יִשְׂמְחוּ-לִי אֹיְבַי שֶׁקֶר שֹׂנְאַי חִנָּם יִקְרְצוּ-עָיִן:
י כִּי לֹא שָׁלוֹם יְדַבֵּרוּ וְעַל רִגְעֵי-אֶרֶץ דְּבָרֵי מִרְמוֹת
יַחֲשֹׁבוּן:
יא וַיַּרְחִיבוּ עָלַי פִּיהֶם אָמְרוּ הֶאָח הֶאָח רָאֲתָה עֵינֵינוּ:
יב רָאִיתָה יְהוָה אַל-תֶּחֱרַשׁ אֲדֹנָי אַל-תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנִּי:
יג הָעִירָה וְהָקִיצָה לְמִשְׁפָּטִי אֱלֹהַי וַאדֹנָי לְרִיבִי:

say anything would make knowing gestures by winking their eyes *chinam*, totally without cause.

20. They would not credit my death with being an atonement for my sins, resulting in my having *shalom*, peace. They would claim that I had never been a righteous person, that my sin had NOT been atoned for, and they would apply to me the saying of Isaiah 48,22 *eyn shalom omer hashem la-resha-im* as per Ketuvot 104, that there is no peace for the wicked, says the Lord.

Should you consider my fears exaggerated since Samuel had told Saul that his kingdom would go to someone better than Saul (Samuel I 15,28) they would consider that those who are *rig-ey eretz*, rest peacefully in the earth, are dead, had spoken deceitfully. (Samuel had been dead for a long time) This is why I said, *yachshevun*, i.e. they will THINK in those terms about Samuel the prophet, though they do not have the audacity to actually SAY it.

21. But about ME they did SAY what they thought. They said "oh brother, oh brother, our eye has seen it". (referring to the sin I committed they would interpret my death as proof I was a wicked person, especially since they had outlived me)

22. David says to G'd "You have seen", i.e. though they may not have said all these things to my face, You know it is true, and therefore I know You will not remain silent nor will Your anger be directed at me for mentioning their behaviour.

23. David had two matters to be settled by *mishpat*, judgement. A) G'd would judge him for his sin with Bat Sheva. B) He would have to judge his adversaries who oppressed him in a manner equal to shedding his blood. Concerning the first matter, David says *hairah ve hakitzah*, wake up, to judge me. Concerning his adversaries he says *elokay va-adonay lerivi.*

David pleads that the *Shechinah* should not depart from him, he wants to be judged by the *Shechinah*. The obvious answer by the *Shechinah* would be that since it is always at home with David, it

[24]Take up my cause, O LORD my God, as You are beneficent, and let them not rejoice over me.
[25]Let them not think, "Aha, just what we wished!"
Let them not say, "We have destroyed him!"
[26]May those who rejoice at my misfortune be frustrated and utterly disgraced; may those who vaunt themselves over me be clad in frustration and shame.
[27]May those who desire my vindication sing forth joyously; may they always say, "Extolled be the LORD who desires the well- being of His servant,"
[28]while my tongue shall recite Your beneficent acts, Your praises all day long.

36 *For the leader, Of the servant of the LORD, of David.*
[2]I know what Transgression says to the wicked; he has no sense of the dread of God,

could not be impartial, could not at the same time be judge and companion. Therefore David adds the attribute *adonay*.

He says he had not meant that the *Shechinah* should ASSIST him when facing judgement or even remain silent when he would face his accuser, on the contrary, *ha-irah*, be awake FOR my *mishpat*, judgement.

When it comes to *rivi*, my quarrel with my adversaries will be adjudged by 2 aspects of Your *midat hadin*, i.e. *adnut* and *elokim*. The latter is the attribute of justice at its most exacting.

24. I do not want their death, but judge me in my quarrel with them by using *tzedek*, i.e. tempering justice with mercy. My whole purpose is *al yismechu li*, that they should not be happy at my death or my discomfort.

25. The absence of joy on their part, their inability to rejoice by saying *bil-anuhu*, we have gobbled him up, will act as a sobering thought, remind them that they had acted from impure motives.

There are 2 classes amongst David's enemies. One class is content to view itself as righteous vis a vis David. That group says *heach nafshenu*, they congratulate themselves on their self righteousness. The other group are content only when they can proclaim "we have swallowed him", i.e. after witnessing David's death.

26. Concerning both, David confirms that he does not want their death, but *yevoshu veyachperu*, let them be ashamed and blush for

כד שָׁפְטֵנִי כְצִדְקְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהָי וְאַל-יִשְׂמְחוּ-לִי:
כה אַל-יֹאמְרוּ בְלִבָּם הֶאָח נַפְשֵׁנוּ אַל יֹאמְרוּ בִלַּעֲנוּהוּ:
כו יֵבֹשׁוּ וְיַחְפְּרוּ יַחְדָּו שְׂמֵחֵי רָעָתִי יִלְבְּשׁוּ בוּשֶׁת כְּלִמָּה
הַמַּגְדִּילִים עָלָי:
כז יָרֹנּוּ וְיִשְׂמְחוּ חֲפֵצֵי צִדְקִי וְיֹאמְרוּ תָמִיד יִגְדַּל יְהוָה
הֶחָפֵץ שְׁלוֹם עַבְדּוֹ:
כח וּלְשׁוֹנִי תֶּהְגֶּה צִדְקֶךָ כָּל-הַיּוֹם תְּהִלָּתֶךָ:

לו

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְעֶבֶד-יְהוָה לְדָוִד:
ב נְאֻם-פֶּשַׁע לָרָשָׁע בְּקֶרֶב לִבִּי אֵין פַּחַד אֱלֹהִים לְנֶגֶד
עֵינָיו:

having enjoyed my ills, let them wear their shame like garments, i.e. all those who placed themselves against me by magnifying themselves, *hamagdilim alay*.

27. David acknowledges that there are *tzaddikim* who view him in a favourable light, and who will derive much joy when he will be exonerated in the confrontation with his enemies.

28. David says that he will not credit his salvation to his righteousness, but to G'd's righteousness. He will thank the Lord for His loyal supporters who see in his vindication proof of his righteousness.

Psalm 36

1. It is fitting to recite a hymn and a song to the "victor", i.e. the servant of G'd, since the evil urge did not succeed in seducing such a person. Such a song is in order not only for people of average intelligence, but even for an outstanding individual such as David.

The Talmud in Sukkot 52, teaches us that the greater the personality, the more powerful is the evil urge which such a person has to cope with. It is therefore at least as difficult for such people to resist their urges as it is for ordinary individuals.

2. David says that the *pesha*, the sin which one has committed speaks to the *rasha*, evil doer, urging him to commit further transgressions. We know this from Avot 4,2. The forces created by

3because its speech is seductive to him till his iniquity be found out and he be hated.
4His words are evil and deceitful; he will not consider doing good.
5In bed he plots mischief; he is set on a path of no good, he does not reject evil.
6O LORD, Your faithfulness reaches to heaven; Your steadfastness to the sky;
7Your beneficence is like the high mountains; Your justice like the great deep; man and beast You deliver, O LORD.

the sin speak within the heart of the sinner. Fear of the Lord is due to the imminence of punishment. Since purgatory is a long way off, will not happen till after one's death, if at all, the seducer calms the sinner by saying not to worry about what is not immediate, i.e. *leneged eynav*.

3. He makes him slide with his eyes, i.e. when the sin, the negative forces created by the sin present the next sin to the sinner like a "find", i.e. *limtzo*, the evil urge does not do so out of loving concern for the sinner, but on the contrary, *lisno*, because he hates him. He advises the sinner to sin because he has with worst interests at heart. Only the *yetzer hatov*, the good urge advises a certain course of action having the person's genuine interest at heart. (compare Psalm 16,2).

4. Everything *pesha* says is vain and deceitful, despite the fact that his advice is dressed up as "good advice", as having its victim's interest at heart. All this is due to the smoothness of the seducer's tongue, i.e. *hechelik elav*.

5. Another factor which persuades the wicked person to sin is the immediate gratification which comes with sin. If someone steals, he can enjoy the proceeds of his sin at once. This is in direct contrast with *mitzvah* performance. Satan pays cash on the line.

Aven yachshov, when the sinner contemplates committing a sin while *al mishkavo* on his bed, his considerations are *yitzyatzev al derech lo tov*, that by choosing the path of *lo tov*, no good, – he will acquire economic independence. Also, since the *tzaddik* sometimes lacks even the necessities of life, the *rasha*, wicked person considers it better to rely on the *derech lo tov*, the evil way, and therefore he does not spurn the advice of his evil urge.

6. The *tzaddik* however will become aware of Your loving

ג כִּי-הֶחֱלִיק אֵלָיו בְּעֵינָיו לִמְצֹא עֲוֹנוֹ לִשְׂנֹא:
ד דִּבְרֵי-פִיו אָוֶן וּמִרְמָה חָדַל לְהַשְׂכִּיל לְהֵיטִיב:
ה אָוֶן יַחְשֹׁב עַל- מִשְׁכָּבוֹ יִתְיַצֵּב עַל-דֶּרֶךְ לֹא-טוֹב רָע לֹא יִמְאָס:
ו יְהוָה בַּהַשָּׁמַיִם חַסְדֶּךָ אֱמוּנָתְךָ עַד-שְׁחָקִים:
ז צִדְקָתְךָ כְּהַרְרֵי-אֵל מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ תְּהוֹם רַבָּה אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה תּוֹשִׁיעַ יְהוָה:

kindness only in heaven, i.e. your body will have to display faith, *emunatcha ad shechakim*, until your soul reaches the celestial regions, where you will collect your reward. Only at the time of the resurrection will he receive his reward. (The word *shechakim* is used as in Chronicles I 18,14 and in Samuel II 8,15, see Sanhedrin 6). It is the lowest of the layers of heaven that houses abstract intellects.

7. This is why I describe Your *tzedek* as like the "mountain of G'd". The kabbalists explain that every one of G'd's attributes includes within it also shadings of His other attributes, so that for instance, the attribute called *hashem*, i.e. the attribute of mercy also includes some amount of *chessed*, loving kindness as well as a modicum of the attribute of *tzedakah* and the attribute of *mishpat*, justice.

Similarly, the attribute *elokim*, i.e. justice, contains a measure of *chessed* loving kindness. However, *chessed* as part of the attribute of mercy is described as *ki rav hoo*, i.e. it is present in abundant measure, whereas the same attribute as part of the attribute of justice plays only a very subordinate role.

David explains the main attraction of the lure of the *yetzer hara*, the evil urge as being the immediate reward it offers to those who accept its urgings, whereas the *chessed* in store for those who practice *emunah*, faith, is long delayed in its manifestation. Knowing this, David does not request an immediate manifestation of G'd's *chessed*. He does, however, ask for an immediate manifestation of G'd's *tzedek*, i.e. *tzidkatcha*, a minor display of how charitable G'd is. *Harerey el* are small hills, not towering mountains. This attribute of *tzedek* should be displayed now in small measure, i.e. like *harerey el*, to reduce the weight of the sins committed by a sinner, so that he can be treated as on a par with the animals, who do not sin, since they are not possessed of intelligence, – even if they were to qualify for *mishpatecha tehom rabbah*, for a manifestation of Your profound justice. This is the meaning of *adam u-veheymah*, animal like man

[8]*How precious is Your faithful care, O God! Mankind shelters in the shadow of Your wings.*
[9]*They feast on the rich fare of Your house; You let them drink at Your refreshing stream.*
[10]*With You is the fountain of life; by Your light do we see light.*
[11]*Bestow Your faithful care on those devoted to You, and Your beneficence on upright men.*
[12]*Let not the foot of the arrogant tread on me, or the hand of the wicked drive me away.*
[13]*There lie the evildoers, fallen, thrust down, unable to rise.*

37

Of David.
Do not be vexed by evil men; do not be incensed by wrongdoers;

toshiah hashem, they too are being saved by G'd. David asks that the *tzedek*, i.e. the charity of G'd should assist those sinners to secure salvation for themselves.

8. To those who want immediate manifestation of G'd's *chessed*, David explains that in many situations G'd's true *chessed* expresses itself within His manifestation as *midat hadin*, the attribute of justice, i.e. His manifestation as *elokim*.

While it is true that at the creation G'd decided to rule the universe by co-opting the attribute of mercy, if He were to rule the world by employing primarily that attribute, man's conduct would become such that ultimately he might no longer be able to escape the need to undergo purgatory before entering the life in the hereafter. G'd's employing *midat hadin*, which embodies a measure of other attributes is man's best guarantee of achieving his task while alive.

This also increases the eventual reward in store for all those who have not questioned G'd's justice, and who suffer afflictions in serenity. The *tzel kenafecha*, the shadow of Your wings, that these people entrust themselves to, is Your attribute of justice, not merely Your attribute of mercy.

9. Such people satiate themselves from the abundance of Your house, i.e. the hereafter, *venachal adanecha* and from the river of Your delicacies, i.e. You let them drink from the waters of the *gan eden* to be established on this earth after the resurrection.

ח מַה-יָּקָר חַסְדְּךָ אֱלֹהִים וּבְנֵי אָדָם בְּצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ
יֶחֱסָיוּן:
ט יִרְוְיֻן מִדֶּשֶׁן בֵּיתֶךָ וְנַחַל עֲדָנֶיךָ תַשְׁקֵם:
י כִּי-עִמְּךָ מְקוֹר חַיִּים בְּאוֹרְךָ נִרְאֶה-אוֹר:
יא מְשֹׁךְ חַסְדְּךָ לְיֹדְעֶיךָ וְצִדְקָתְךָ לְיִשְׁרֵי-לֵב:
יב אַל-תְּבוֹאֵנִי רֶגֶל גַּאֲוָה וְיַד-רְשָׁעִים אַל-תְּנִדֵנִי:
יג שָׁם נָפְלוּ פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן דֹּחוּ וְלֹא-יָכְלוּ קוּם:

לז א לְדָוִד אַל תִּתְחַר בַּמְרֵעִים אַל-תְּקַנֵּא בְּעֹשֵׂי עַוְלָה:

Surely no one is ignorant enough to trade such prospects for the paltry gratifications available on earth in our time.

10. Because such a person can walk with You, i.e. *imcha*, Your *midat hadin*, attribute of justice, and suffer afflictions, this becomes his *mekor chayim*, source of eternal life, as we read in Proverbs 6,23 "and the way to life is via disciplining". Deeper insights are granted to those who suffer afflictions without loss of faith in G'd.

11. Nonetheless, David asks some visible manifestation of G'd's *chessed* for those who "know You", and some *tzedakah*, charity, for those who are *yishrey lev*, steadfast in their hearts. In other words "let not ONLY the attribute of justice be in evidence!" This second group of people is on a higher niveau, not relying on any *chessed* (undeserved kindness).

12. By not showering the world with too much *chessed*, worldly success, You help me not to become proud, as a result of which I might spurn Your laws. Still, I cannot forego Your *chessed* altogether, otherwise the success of the sinners in this world might sway my faith in Your justice.

13. The reason I want to spurn pride is because it is the kind of pit, *bor* that the wicked, once having fallen into cannot rise from again.

However, I have asked for only a small display of Your *chessed* so that jealousy of the *po-aley aven* the doers of evil should not lead to my irretrievable fall from G'd's grace.

Psalm 37

1. The holy spirit advises EVEN a person of such absolute faith in G'd as David, – not to mix with the successful wicked in this world.

2for they soon wither like grass, like verdure fade away.
3Trust in the LORD and do good, abide in the land and remain loyal.
4Seek the favor of the LORD, and He will grant you the desires of your heart.
5Leave all to the LORD; trust in Him; He will do it.
6He will cause your vindication to shine forth like the light, the justice of your case, like the noonday sun.

The meaning of *titchar* is not to mix (with the wicked). The closer one is to successful sinners, the more likely is it that one will question G'd's justice when comparing oneself to those people. By staying away from such doers of evil, *al tekaneh*, you will not become jealous of the success of these wrongdoers.

2. The reason I tell you not to be jealous of them is that they will speedily be cut down like grass, and will wilt like green herbs. This is similar to the statement in Bereshit Rabbah 39,7, that the living are called dead during their lifetime, having severed their connection with their celestial roots. Compare also Berachot 18. Every Jewish soul is attached to its heavenly source, but the sins committed by the bodies inhabited by those souls create the rupture that severs this attachment.

As long as herbs are connected to a source of water, they do not wilt; similarly the soul. Its water supply, i.e. its lifeline is its connection with its roots in heaven. The sinner's daily success in this life, uses up this "water supply" i.e. his life support system in the "higher" world. We are advised therefore NOT to wonder at the shortlived success of the sinners.

3. Inversely, do not be upset at the sufferings of the *tzaddik*, but trust in G'd and continue to do good. Do not make success in THIS life your primary ambition. Serve the Lord. If you do these two things, your place in the hereafter will be assured. Our sages (Pessachim 113, Sifri Ha-azinu 32,43) say that if someone resides in Israel, teaches his children Torah and speaks the holy tongue (Hebrew), he is assured of a place in the hereafter. Since David did not need to be told by the holy spirit to speak Hebrew, the holy spirit refers only to the other two items, i.e. to reside within the land of Israel, i.e. *shechon eretz*, and *re-ey emunah*, raise your wards faithfully in Torah study, be a faithful shepherd. Torah is called *emunah*, Psalms 119,86. A father's relationship to his children is like that of a shepherd to his flock.

4. Should you say that you are constantly persecuted, suffer

ה כִּי כֶחָצִיר מְהֵרָה יִמָּלוּ וּכְיֶרֶק דֶּשֶׁא יִבּוֹלוּן׃
ו בְּטַח בַּיהוָה וַעֲשֵׂה-טוֹב שְׁכָן-אֶרֶץ וּרְעֵה אֱמוּנָה׃
ז וְהִתְעַנַּג עַל-יְהוָה וְיִתֶּן-לְךָ מִשְׁאֲלוֹת לִבֶּךָ׃
ח גּוֹל עַל-יְהוָה דַּרְכֶּךָ וּבְטַח עָלָיו וְהוּא יַעֲשֶׂה׃
ט וְהוֹצִיא כָאוֹר צִדְקֶךָ וּמִשְׁפָּטֶךָ כַּצָּהֳרָיִם׃

disease etc., do not be anxious. Seek your bliss in G'd. (like Choni ha-me-agel). He will grant the requests of your heart. This will have to suffice. (Choni was desperately poor personally, nonetheless he could cause rain to fall by describing a circle around himself and refusing to move outside it till rain would come. Taanit 19, and 23) Choni's appeal to G'd was based on the people's PERCEPTION that he was well regarded in heaven.

5. Cast your path upon G'd. The promise that G'd will fulfil your requests is conditional on your not asking for your personal benefit, or in order to prove that G'd regards you with favour. Only if you omit all your personal concerns, i.e. ask for them only in order to be able to advance the concerns of heaven, *u-vetach alav* and trust in Him exclusively, – My promise holds. (when asking for rain, your concern must not be to be able to eat and drink, but to employ the rain and what it causes to grow in the service of the Lord.)

6. By rights, the Psalmist should have used the future tense, i.e. *veyotzi che-or tzidkecha*, and HE WILL bring forth your righteousness. However, the holy spirit is making a point here. A person who suffers afflictions at the beginning of his career, and whose afflictions intensify continuously, might rebel and become fed up with having to undergo all this suffering.

The Psalmist explains that if that is the condition that some *tzaddikim* find themselves in, it was in order to enable them to cope with these *yissurim*, afflictions. Had they been struck with the FULL intensity of the afflictions at the beginning of their career (life), they could not have withstood it, just as if the midday sun would shine at the time of sunrise, man could not bear it. Therefore, the intensity of the afflictions sometimes increases *katzoharayaim* until your judgments reach its most intense period at what seems like noontime.

When our sages who formulated our daily prayers speak about *ha-meir la-aretz veladarim ale-ha berachamim*, they have added the word *berachamim*, in mercy, to signal that the fact that the sun does

[7]Be patient and wait for the LORD, do not be vexed by the prospering man who carries out his schemes.
[8]Give up anger, abandon fury, do not be vexed; it can only do harm.
[9]For evil men will be cut off, but those who look to the LORD– they shall inherit the land.
[10]A little longer and there will be no wicked man; you will look at where he was– he will be gone.
[11]But the lowly shall inherit the land, and delight in abundant well-being.

not emerge at full strength in the early morning is an act of mercy. We would all be blinded if we were to awaken from our sleep to a midday sun.

At the beginning of your career then your righteousness was still difficult to discern – afflictions notwithstanding. By the time you suffer their full intensity however, – your righteousness and justice will be clear as the sunshine at noon. Israel's sins will gradually disappear, as the dark gives way to light. Then Israel will be revealed in all its righteousness after having been thoroughly cleansed of sin by its sufferings.

7. It is human nature to be a social climber, to bask in the reflected glory of the social environment of the rich and influential, or even to plead with the successful for a handout. When doing so, most people do not differentiate if the rich man is Torah observant or not. This may lead to sins both by the supplicant and the wealthy man. The supplicant puts his faith in the rich man instead of in G'd, whereas the rich man, if he refuses the supplicant commits a sin similar to worshipping idols. (see Deut. 15,9, where the word *davar beli-ya-al* is used both for idol worshippers and those who are stingy in charity.) (compare Ketuvot 68) Denying charity, says the Talmud is akin to worshipping idols. Even an INACTIVITY, i.e. ignoring requests for charity is accounted as such a severe sin. It is one of the few situations when mere thoughts are accounted as if a sinful deed had actually been executed. (compare Kiddushin 40)

The Psalmist says that if you suffer the most severe of afflictions, i.e. hunger, having no livelihood, (as per Leviticus 26,26) – *dom lashem*, trust in G'd patiently, silently, cry – to Him with the same humility with which you would approach a rich man for a handout. Ask Him, since He is the owner of all silver and gold. (Chaggai 2,8)

Do not ask for your needs from the rich man, i.e. *al titchar bematzliach darko, be-ish osseh mezimot*, because you would wind

ז דּוֹם לַיהוָה וְהִתְחוֹלֵל לוֹ אַל-תִּתְחַר בְּמַצְלִיחַ דַּרְכּוֹ
בְּאִישׁ עֹשֶׂה מְזִמּוֹת:
ח הֶרֶף מֵאַף וַעֲזֹב חֵמָה אַל תִּתְחַר אַךְ לְהָרַע:
ט כִּי-מְרֵעִים יִכָּרֵתוּן וְקוֵוי יְהוָה הֵמָּה יִירְשׁוּ אָרֶץ:
י וְעוֹד מְעַט וְאֵין רָשָׁע וְהִתְבּוֹנַנְתָּ עַל-מְקוֹמוֹ וְאֵינֶנּוּ:
יא וַעֲנָוִים יִירְשׁוּ-אָרֶץ וְהִתְעַנְּגוּ עַל-רֹב שָׁלוֹם:

up trusting someone whose thoughts, i.e. *mezimot* are accounted as if he had actually *osseh*, carried them out. (the evil thoughts). By pleading with such a person, you yourself would share in his sin, i.e. *attah machati-o*.

8. We have explained repeatedly (chapter 6,2) that *af* is a stronger kind of anger than *chemah*. This is why *af* is masculine, while the word *chemah* is feminine. This is also why at the golden calf episode G'd Himself had to remove the *af*, whereas Moses was able to remove the *chemah*.

The holy spirit says: "Did I not tell you NOT to associate with the wicked, and you responded that by associating with them you might persuade them to abandon their ways and repent." To this argument the holy spirit responds "do this if you have assuaged your burning anger at the success the wicked had achieved. If your anger has reached the intensity of *af*, at least it may be reduced to the level of *chemah*. Subsequently, *azov chemah* get rid even of your *chemah* kind of anger. When I said to you not to attach yourself to the sinner, i.e. *al titchar ach lehoreya*, I meant that you must not adopt any of the ways of these wicked people. If however, you have not PREVIOUSLY completely ceased to be jealous of his success, – you are not to associate with such people EVEN in order to win them over to G'd's ways.

9. How can you comfort yourself when you watch their success? Only by the knowledge that their success is shortlived, whereas those who put their hope in the Lord will inherit the earth. (possess it permanently).

10. Our sages have commented on Psalms 9,7 "O enemy, the waste places have ceased to be forever", i.e. that the deeds of the wicked DESTROY them, i.e. THEY cease to exist, whereas their ruins remain forever. Not so when G'd does the destroying. In that event no vestige remains even of the ruins, *ve-arim natashta*. *Avad zichrom hemah*, no memory remains of them, whereas G'd will remain

[12]*The wicked man schemes against the righteous, and gnashes his teeth at him.*
[13]*The Lord laughs at him, for He knows that his day will come.*
[14]*The wicked draw their swords, bend their bows, to bring down the lowly and needy, to slaughter upright men.*
[15]*Their swords shall pierce their own hearts, and their bows shall be broken.*

forever. Perhaps in our verse we can similarly explain the difference between the wicked and the righteous. Although the wicked leave behind them the ruins of their WORKS, the *tzaddik*, when he dies leaves a soul which hovers over the earth for 7 days. (Bereshit Rabbah 3,6, that the deluge was delayed during the 7 days after the death of Methuselah since his soul still hovered over the earth). We have explained in the book of Esther that the reason Haman did not decree the destruction of the Jews to occur on the 7th of Adar was, that he wanted the 7 days of mourning for Moses to elapse. He had felt that the remains of Moses' soul over the earth at that time might protect the Jewish people since Moses had died on the 7th of Adar.

Not so the death of the wicked. As soon as the sinner dies, not a trace of his soul hovers over earth. In this way, their deeds do not only destroy them physically, but G'd terminates any trace of them.

11. Since the meek will inherit the earth in the future, after the wicked have worn out their inheritance just as one wears out clothing, the meek (righteous) are asked to take delight already now, i.e. *hitangu* instead of *yitangu* in the rosy future that awaits them. This explanation is based on the *etnachta* tone sign under the word *eretz* indicating that the subject of the word *hitangu* are NOT the *anavim*the meek of the future in the first half of the verse.

12. Should you say that you had remained silent in face of the success of the wicked, but why would you also need to cope with the wicked attacking the righteous?

13. G'd answers not to worry about your lack of concern. Your worry is due only to the fact that you do not know the date when the wicked will receive his deserts, i.e. *ki yavo yomo*. Had you known the date, you would already laugh at him, as does G'd Himself, – who knows that date.

14. The Psalmist proves this from a historic parallel. Bereshit Rabbah 42,1, describes Nimrod/Amrafel as capturing poor Lot as designed to lure the *yishrey derech* i.e. those who pursue the straight path, i.e. Abraham into coming to Lot's rescue.

יג זֹמֵם רָשָׁע לַצַּדִּיק וְחֹרֵק עָלָיו שִׁנָּיו:
יג אֲדֹנָי יִשְׂחַק-לוֹ כִּי-רָאָה כִּי-יָבֹא יוֹמוֹ:
יד חֶרֶב פָּתְחוּ רְשָׁעִים וְדָרְכוּ קַשְׁתָּם לְהַפִּיל עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן
לִטְבוֹחַ יִשְׁרֵי-דָרֶךְ:
טו חַרְבָּם תָּבוֹא בְלִבָּם וְקַשְׁתוֹתָם תִּשָּׁבַרְנָה:

Our hymn introduces the subject of Amrafel and his exploits only to bring proof of what is in store for the successful wicked person. The Tanchuma quoted in Bereshit Rabbah 42,3 describes that Amrafel considered it below his dignity to march against Abraham, one man, with the armies of 4 kings. Therefore, he lured Abraham into pursuing him to have a chance to kill him. The tables were turned however, and Abraham killed Nimrod/Amrafel. This is the meaning of "their swords entered their own hearts" (verse 15), and their archers were broken". The hint of that event is introduced here for a reason. Why did Nimrod pursue Abraham in the first place? Our sages in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 24, tell us that when Abraham was born and Nimrod was king over the people who built the tower of Babel, he had already wanted to kill Abraham. (Abraham hid out for a number of years) When Abraham had been 48 years of age and had seen the work of the tower in progress, he asked the people why they engaged in such a futile enterprise as attempting to capture heaven. Nimrod told his people to ignore Abraham since the latter was unable to sire children. At that point Abraham cursed in the name of G'd, wishing the people to become divided amongst themselves and their language to become confused. (Psalms 58,10)

The whole story sounds strange. Why would G'd allow Nimrod to survive and remain king? Why did He not kill him for attempting to destroy Abraham? Why force Abraham to go into hiding?

The reason is that G'd knew in advance when Nimrod's "day would come", i.e. the timing of his downfall, so that he could laugh already at that point. He knew that Abraham would kill Nimrod/Amrafel. In view of this it was better that Abraham would kill than that G'd personally would have to destroy him. In addition, of course, the builders of the tower were peaceful men, brotherly, united, a fact which helps defer any punishment such people are in line for.

15. G'd took His time destroying the terrestrial Nimrod, since once he had broken Nimrod's spiritual representative, his power, i.e. that of his kingdom and the spirit of impurity which it represented had

16*Better the little that the righteous man has than the great abundance of the wicked.*
17*For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD is the support of the righteous.*
18*The LORD is concerned for the needs of the blameless; their portion lasts forever;*
19*they shall not come to grief in bad times; in famine, they shall eat their fill.*
20*But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be consumed, like meadow grass consumed in smoke.*
21*The wicked man borrows and does not repay; the righteous is generous and keeps giving.*
22*Those blessed by Him shall inherit the land, but those cursed by Him shall be cut off.*

effectively been reduced, and G'd could afford to wait till Abraham would kill him.

16. Having quoted an example to prove that the sinner will get his just deserts, as proven from the experience of Abraham, showing that the sinner's plan backfired, the Psalmist now brings an example concerning the *tzaddik*'s original concern, namely the success of the wicked in this world.

Abraham has taught us that the *tzaddik* prefers little, compared to the vast treasures amassed by the wicked, i.e. the king of Sodom. (Genesis 14,23) Abraham had actually declined to accept the loot captured from Amrafel once the king of Sodom had acted as if it were Abraham's by the king's consent.

17. He had realized that the "arms" of the wicked, i.e. the Sodomites were its material wealth and would be broken, whereas Abraham and family, i.e. the righteous prefer to rely on G'd rather than on their personal wealth to protect them.

18. Having said that G'd is the support of the righteous, it was difficult to reconcile this with the sufferings of many of the *tzaddikim*.

The Psalmist therefore reaffirms that G'd is well aware of the way these perfect people spend their lifetime. However, their inheritance, when it comes, will endure forever. This is how the Zohar Vayechi 217 explains the verse "the days of Israel approached to die". (Genesis 47,29) The "days" themselves remained alive, and were approaching. "Days" is a simile for the hereafter. Similarly here, G'd is

טז טוֹב מְעַט לַצַּדִּיק מֵהֲמוֹן רְשָׁעִים רַבִּים:
יז כִּי זְרוֹעוֹת רְשָׁעִים תִּשְׁבַּרְנָה וְסוֹמֵךְ צַדִּיקִים יְהוָה:
יח יֹדֵעַ יְהוָה יְמֵי תְמִימִם וְנַחֲלָתָם לְעוֹלָם תִּהְיֶה:
יט לֹא-יֵבֹשׁוּ בְּעֵת רָעָה וּבִימֵי רְעָבוֹן יִשְׂבָּעוּ:
כ כִּי רְשָׁעִים יֹאבֵדוּ וְאֹיְבֵי יְהוָה כִּיקַר כָּרִים כָּלוּ בֶּעָשָׁן כָּלוּ:
כא לֹוֶה רָשָׁע וְלֹא יְשַׁלֵּם וְצַדִּיק חוֹנֵן וְנוֹתֵן:
כב כִּי מְבֹרָכָיו יִירְשׁוּ אָרֶץ וּמְקֻלָּלָיו יִכָּרֵתוּ:

aware of those "days", i.e. the hereafter reserved for the *temimim*, the perfect ones.

The word *yodea*, is used as in Exodus 2,25, "G'd knew", was aware, or as in Amos 3,2 "only you I have known", i.e. in a loving way. G'd means that some of His holiness and mercy has been conferred upon Israel. The complaint of these *temimim* is why all this should apply only in the spiritual world after death. They want it to apply also to the time when evil comes upon this world when it should sustain them in the time of famine, in THIS life, so that their faith in G'd should not be a source of shame for them.

19. In short, Israel is NOT envious of the shortlived success of the sinners, but does not understand why its own bliss must be only *le-olam*, i.e. in the world to come, not *ba-olam*, i.e. in the present world.

20. I am not concerned with the good fortune of the sinners, since I am aware they will perish, and that G'd's enemies will go up in smoke like the fat of rams. The latter simile describes the fate of those sinners who had deliberately angered G'd during their lifetime, as undergoing prolonged suffering in purgatory. See Gittin 57, describing REPEATED destruction of the same sinner, hence the repeated *kalu, kalu* in our verse.

21. To the instruction by the holy spirit NOT to mind the success of the *rasha*, evil doer, and the poverty of the righteous, Israel replies that at least let G'd's Providence become evident by enabling the *tzaddik* to demonstrate that HE IS A *TZADDIK* through his lending to the impoverished, and convert the loan into a gift if the borrower is unable to repay the loan. (compare Ketuvot 67)

22. Since the Talmud Baba Batra 9 tells us about the multiple blessings received by those who give even small amounts of alms to

23The steps of a man are made firm by the LORD, when He delights in his way.
24Though he stumbles, he does not fall down, for the LORD gives him support.

the poor, it would be appropriate for the *mevorchav* i.e. those who bless the Lord to be at least in a position to perform this *mitzvah* so that they can inherit the earth, enjoy years of this life by dint of performing this commandment, says Israel. (compare Isaiah 58, 11–12.)

23. To this argument the holy spirit replies that if you see a righteous person who has been gracious and given charity and has then become impoverished so that he lacks bread, whereas on the other hand the rich evil man borrowed and did not repay, – do not assume that this proves lack of Divine Providence.

On the contrary, *mehashem mitzady gever*, G'd directs man's steps. Compare G'd to a physician who attends two patients. He prescribes a diet free from all restrictions for one of the patients, while he puts the second patient on a starvation diet. Do we accuse such a physician of loving the first patient and hating the second patient? Surely not; we credit the doctor's expertise with knowing what to prescribe for different diseases, i.e. different patients. There is no man alive who does not suffer from some spiritual disease in some form or other. G'd knows that Reuben for instance can only be cured if he is encouraged to develop a streak of generosity. Therefore He grants him wealth so that he can engage in helping the poor. Shimon, on the other hand may be suffering from pride, and a dose of poverty may help him to develop a streak of humility.

This is especially so if Shimon had been very proud in his first life on earth. His reincarnation is designed to perfect his character, and poverty would help achieve this. In this way, the poor and the rich when they meet each other may each achieve personality growth as the result of their meeting. The rich would enhance his personality by giving, the poor by being forced by circumstances to accept a loan or gift. *konen*, He rectifies his steps, granting him wealth. In short, G'd equips a person so that he can take the proper steps, *me-hashem mitzadey gever*.

24. You may reply that except for the aspect of poverty, you could have borne it all silently, without even asking G'd for giving His reasons. In connection with his poverty, man has three major concerns. 1) he does not want to appear as if G'd had despised him, his poverty being used as evidence of this. We know this from the

כג מֵיְהוָה מִצְעֲדֵי-גֶבֶר כּוֹנָנוּ וְדַרְכּוֹ יֶחְפָּץ׃
כד כִּי יִפֹּל לֹא-יוּטָל כִּי יְהוָה סוֹמֵךְ יָדוֹ׃
כה נַעַר הָיִיתִי גַם-זָקַנְתִּי וְלֹא-רָאִיתִי צַדִּיק נֶעֱזָב וְזַרְעוֹ מְבַקֶּשׁ-לָחֶם׃

argument between Turnusrufus the Roman general and Rabbi Akiva. The Roman asked Rabbi Akiva if G'd loved the poor as much as He said, why did He not make them rich, instead of making them depend on handouts? (Baba Batra 10) He suggested that it was in fact improper to feed the poor since G'd had indicated He despised them! Would a subject who knows that the king has denied his servant sustenance dare to contravene the king's wishes? 2) a second concern of the poor is that the rich might refuse him the help sought and he might then be fated to starve to death. 3) A third concern of the poor would be his inability to leave his wealth to his children, who in turn would be condemned to remain poor, and not occupy a dignified position in society. After all, the poor man's children might not be so meek as to put up silently with their fate.

The Psalmist, i.e. the holy spirit addresses itself to all these concerns and say 1) *ki yipol lo yutal*, though he may fall into poverty, this does not mean that G'd has cast him out. Not at all like Turnusrufus interpreted poverty, i.e. as a sign of G'd's anger at such a person. On the contrary, by the very fact that G'd has impoverished such a person, *somech yado*, He supports his hand. Rabbi Akiva explained this by a parable which bases itself on the verse in Deut. 14,1 "you are the children of the Lord your G'd". Turnusrufus had quoted a verse from Leviticus 25,55, which describes the Israel/G'd relationship as one between slave and master. Rabbi Akiva described a scenario of a father who had occasion to be angry at his son, denying him the usual privileges of a prince including receiving his meals. Would not such a father be grateful to a person who offered sustenance to his son he asked? Surely the father would not want the son to die of starvation! Thus far part of the dialogue between Rabbi Akiva and the Roman general. The king, i.e. the father always has the best interests of his son at heart.

Similarly, if G'd impoverishes a *tzaddik*, He has the *tzaddik*'s best interest at heart. He hopes the *tzaddik* will examine his ways and see where he can improve them still further. Just as Hoseah 7,15 says "I have disciplined and thereby strengthened their arms", so G'd is *somech* supportive of him who has fallen. (into poverty).

25I have been young and am now old, but I have never seen a righteous man abandoned, or his children seeking bread.
26He is always generous, and lends, and his children are held blessed.
27Shun evil and do good, and you shall abide forever.
28For the LORD loves what is right, He does not abandon His faithful ones.
They are preserved forever, while the children of the wicked will be cut off.
29The righteous shall inherit the land, and abide forever in it.
30The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is right.
31The teaching of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip.
32The wicked watches for the righteous, seeking to put him to death;
33the LORD will not abandon him to his power; He will not let him be condemned in judgment.

25. Concerning the possibility that the poor might starve to death if the rich refuse to give him a handout, the holy spirit in the guise of the *saro shel olam*, i.e. G'd's agent in charge of handing out livelihoods, states that in his experience such fears are unwarranted. G'd does not leave the fate of the poor ENTIRELY in the hands of the rich and their caprice. If the poor will not be helped by one rich man, he will be helped by someone else. He will not be abandoned by all those who practise loving kindness.

Concerning the third fear of the poor, the fact that he cannot endow his children, and that therefore they too will be condemned to a life of poverty, the same *sar ha-olam* states that poverty is not hereditary, that the fact that the father is poor, does not mean that the children have to be poor.

26. Since the *tzaddik* spent all his time, i.e. *kol hayom* being generous and being a lender, G'd will send His blessing to his progeny, and he will not be poor also.

27. Having described all the retribution in store for the wicked, the holy spirit addresses itself to such wicked people, who have despaired of doing *teshuvah*, repentance, having seen themselves described as being without a future. These wicked people are

כו כָּל הַיּוֹם חוֹנֵן וּמַלְוֶה וְזַרְעוֹ לִבְרָכָה:
כז סוּר מֵרָע וַעֲשֵׂה-טוֹב וּשְׁכוֹן לְעוֹלָם:
כח כִּי יְהוָה אֹהֵב מִשְׁפָּט וְלֹא-יַעֲזֹב אֶת-חֲסִידָיו לְעוֹלָם
נִשְׁמָרוּ וְזֶרַע רְשָׁעִים נִכְרָת:
כט צַדִּיקִים יִירְשׁוּ-אָרֶץ וְיִשְׁכְּנוּ לָעַד עָלֶיהָ:
ל פִּי-צַדִּיק יֶהְגֶּה חָכְמָה וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ תְּדַבֵּר מִשְׁפָּט:
לא תּוֹרַת אֱלֹהָיו בְּלִבּוֹ לֹא תִמְעַד אֲשֻׁרָיו:
לב צוֹפֶה רָשָׁע לַצַּדִּיק וּמְבַקֵּשׁ לַהֲמִיתוֹ:
לג יְהוָה לֹא יַעַזְבֶנּוּ בְיָדוֹ וְלֹא יַרְשִׁיעֶנּוּ בְּהִשָּׁפְטוֹ:

assured that there IS A WAY to regenerate themselves. Not only that, but *baaley teshuvah*, repentant sinners are held in higher esteem even than the perfectly righteous. (Berachot 34) Therefore the *ruach hakodesh*, holy spirit implores the sinner to become a *baal teshuvah*. He is advised to return NOT because of fear of punishment, but because of a feeling of love for G'd, so that his former sins can be accounted as merits. (Yuma 84).

28. Even though, i.e. *ki*, G'd who loves justice will obviously NOT forsake those who are His devout, and who have refrained from sinning in the first place, i.e. *leolam nishme-ru*, and though, of course, using the same criteria, the wicked i.e. *zera resha-im* will be cut off, exterminated, this is a form of justice practiced by all rulers who do not give a criminal a second chance in this life, G'd does give second chances.

29. Or, even if those people were not totally pious, just regular *tzaddikim*, – since they have never sinned they are entitled to inherit the earth and dwell in it; not so the wicked who deserve to die according to the rules of justice established by man.

30. G'd explains – that the *baal teshuvah*, repentant sinner needs to be given MORE credit than the NATURAL *tzaddik*, who has overcome fewer handicaps, his mouth always having spoken words of wisdom, and his tongue always having reflected justice, i.e. Torah truth.

31. Besides, such a person's heart was full of Torah, his steps were unlikely to stumble.

32. All this in spite of the rule that the greater the personality, the greater the power of his *yetzer hara*, evil urge. (Sukkah 52) One need not give the *tzaddik* too much credit.

34*Look to the LORD and keep to His way, and He will raise you high that you may inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.*
35*I saw a wicked man, powerful, well-rooted like a robust native tree.*
36*Suddenly he vanished and was gone; I sought him, but he was not to be found.*
37*Mark the blameless, not the upright, for there is a future for the man of integrity.*

33. Since G'd does not abandon the ***tzaddik*** to the wiles of the evil urge, in order that he should not be found wicked when it is time to judge him, the ***tzaddik***'s very righteousness is at least partially due to the grace of G'd.

Not so the wicked person, who had forfeited G'd's assistance against his ***yetzer hara***, evil urge. His achievement WHEN HE DOES fight his evil urge, is therefore much greater than that of the natural ***tzaddik***.

34. Should a wicked person despair of successful repentance since he views the ***yetzer hara*** as his landlord, i.e. as being in a commanding position, G'd addresses such a person directly – just as when he exhorted him to pursue the path of evil (verse 27) – and says ***kaveh el hashem***, start striving towards the Lord, observe His way and THEN ***yerommimcha*** He will elevate you to inherit the land of the ***elyonim***, of the celestial spheres. He will help you not to stumble and you will see the wicked (those who have not repented) being cut off. The reason you will be allowed to see the fate that overtakes the sinners is to show you what should have been your fate – if not for G'd's generous nature.

35. David testifies that he has seen a ***rasha***, wicked person display his wickedness shamelessly and develop like an evergreen tree which seems as if it can never be uprooted. (because he did repent)

We have a tradition that the soul has a spiritual pipeline to its celestial origin which is severed if a person turns into a ***rasha***. If a man repents, he repairs this pipeline and becomes re-attached to his roots, so to speak. *Ezrach* is the description of a person who has never been severed from his roots. David describes the flourishing of that person as being like someone who had never been nor ever would be separated from the sources of his success. He expected such a person to go on living.

36. Nonetheless, ***va-yavor***, one day he passed away, was no more and did not leave a trace of his existence behind. Why, asks David,

לד קַוֵּה אֶל-יְהוָה וּשְׁמֹר דַּרְכּוֹ וִירוֹמִמְךָ לָרֶשֶׁת אָרֶץ
בְּהִכָּרֵת רְשָׁעִים תִּרְאֶה:
לה רָאִיתִי רָשָׁע עָרִיץ וּמִתְעָרֶה כְּאֶזְרָח רַעֲנָן:
לו וַיַּעֲבֹר וְהִנֵּה אֵינֶנּוּ וָאֲבַקְשֵׁהוּ וְלֹא נִמְצָא:
לז שְׁמֹר-תָּם וּרְאֵה יָשָׁר כִּי-אַחֲרִית לְאִישׁ שָׁלוֹם:

was that person's *teshuvah* not VISIBLY rewarded then? David says that he investigated the case and could not account for it.

37. To this comment the holy spirit replies by saying *shemor tam!*, preserve your status of being *tam*, i.e. of not questioning G'd's ways.

From the time David had been anointed by Samuel, and despite all the troubles and persecutions he had experienced, he had NEVER questioned G'd's ways. G'd warns him to retain this total faith, *temimut. re-eh yashar*, perceive G'd as upright, – as you have been in the habit of doing, because *acharit lo-ish shalom*, the repentant sinner is called *shalom* (Isaiah 57,19), he has a future, i.e. *acharit*. The verse in Isaiah means that the *rachok*, the distant one to whom one offers *shalom*, used to be *rachok* distant, and has now become *karov*, close, i.e. to his heritage. (Sanhedrin 99).

The adjective *shalom* describes the joining together of matters which had been separated. The sinner's deeds had separated him from his roots in heaven, and his repentance has re-established the bond.

Every repentant sinner has to achieve a certain objective. His soul has to achieve a degree of harmony. Once that objective has been reached, – there is no further purpose in life on earth for such a person.

Since different people are at different distances from their respective Divinely appointed objectives, some may HAVE to live on this earth for a very long time, whereas others having achieved their *tachlit*, purpose, may die quite soon after having become *baaley teshuvah*, repentant sinners. This is what Kohelet Rabbah 5, (11,5) says about Rabbi Bun, who died at an early age. He had accomplished in 28 years of study on earth what it takes others more than a hundred years to accomplish.

The repentant sinner who had died suddenly, and who had been referred to by David, had been of such a type that he had achieved his purpose shortly after having returned to the fold, to his traditional roots.

38 *But transgressors shall be utterly destroyed, the future*
of the wicked shall be cut off.
39 *The deliverance of the righteous comes from the*
LORD, their stronghold in time of trouble.
40 *The LORD helps them and rescues them, rescues them*
from the wicked and delivers them, for they seek refuge
in Him.

38 *A psalm of David.* Lehazkir.

38. On the other hand, when you observe transgressors being destroyed together, the reason G'd did not grant them a regular life span is that G'd knew that they would not repent even if He gave them many more years. (Yuma 87, Avot 5,20)

People who cause others to sin are not granted an opportunity, i.e. time to become *baaley teshuvah*. *Poshim*, are those who sin to demonstrate their independence vis a vis G'd. Their *acharit* is cut off, they do not deserve a chance to achieve what ought to have been their goals.

39. Referring back to the theme of verse 32, that the *yetzer hara*, evil urge lies in wait for the *tzaddik* and that only with the help of G'd does the *tzaddik* withstand him, the Psalmist spells this out once more.

However, G'd does not take this fact into consideration when judging the *tzaddik* on his accomplishments. He considers the *mitzvah* performed by the *tzaddik* (even with His help) as a "fortress for him in his time of distress". G'd does not say "since you would not have performed this deed without My help, how can I give you credit"?

An example of this is the story of Rabbi Akiva's daughter related in Shabbat 156. She had been told by the astrologers that she would die on the day of her wedding by a snakebite. She worried about this prediction.

On the day of the wedding, she stuck a needle in a hole in the wall, accidentally piercing the eye of the snake which had holed up in there. She was unaware of this at the time. On the following morning, when she went to retrieve the needle, the dead snake came out with it. Her father asked her what good deed she might have performed that would account for such a miracle to have been performed for her sake. She told him that during the wedding feast preparation a poor man had been knocking on the door and no one

לח וּפֹשְׁעִים נִשְׁמְדוּ יַחְדָּו אַחֲרִית רְשָׁעִים נִכְרָתָה:
לט וּתְשׁוּעַת צַדִּיקִים מֵיְהוָה מָעוּזָּם בְּעֵת צָרָה:
מ וַיַּעְזְרֵם יְהוָה וַיְפַלְּטֵם יְפַלְּטֵם מֵרְשָׁעִים וְיוֹשִׁיעֵם כִּי חָסוּ בוֹ:

לח

א מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד לְהַזְכִּיר:

had heard him. When she became aware of the knocks, she had admitted the man and given him her own portion of the wedding feast to eat.

Rabbi Akiva concluded that charity does not only save a person from violent death, but from death itself (if it had been decreed for a certain date).

40. Not only does G'd NOT deduct from the value of our *mitzvot*, commandments performed, because He had given us help against the evil urge, but He even helps the *tzaddik* escape from the attack of the wicked, who is after all possessed of free will, something with which G'd does not interfere. (Daniel 3,17)

Even if we have already been captured by the *resha-im*, the wicked people, He can and will still save the *tzaddik*, because the latter put his trust in Him.

Possibly, – *vaya-azrem* means saving a person from a violent death, as in the instance of Rabbi Akiva's daughter, whereas *va-yefaltem* means escaping the fate of death (at that time) altogether.

The power of the *mitzvah*, good deed then is great enough to completely neutralize what would normally have been the *tzaddik*'s fate.

Psalm 38

1 Why does David describe a chapter devoted to a record of his sins and the tribulations he suffered as a result of this, as a "psalm" instead of as a "lament", a *kinah*? However, seeing that he is engaged in repentance and does not reject the afflictions he has to suffer, what might otherwise have been an occasion for a song of mourning, has been turned into a hymn, a song of praise. This is why it is *le-hazkir*, something deserving to be remembered.

[2]*O LORD, do not punish me in wrath; do not chastise me in fury.*
[3]*For Your arrows have struck me; Your blows have fallen upon me.*
[4]*There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your rage, no wholeness in my bones because of my sin.*
[5]*For my iniquities have overwhelmed me, they are like a heavy burden, more than I can bear.*
[6]*My wounds stink and fester because of my folly.*
[7]*I am all bent and bowed; I walk about in gloom all day long.*
[8]*For my sinews are full of fever; there is no soundness in my flesh.*
[9]*I am all benumbed and crushed; I roar because of the turmoil in my mind.*

2. ***Aph, ketzef, chemah, za-am*** are names for ***malachey rogez***, "angels of anger", whose task it is to expunge guilt and sin. They are referred to as ***chitzov yitbarach***, G'd's arrows. What distinguishes them from G'd's regular attributes of mercy is that they do not contain any aspects of mercy, ***rachamim***.

Therefore, if G'd loves someone, He will not discipline them by employing any of these ***malachey rogez***, messengers of His anger, but will attend to such retribution as is required personally.

This is David's request when he says "Lord, do not discipline me with Your ***ketzef***. Although ***ketzef*** is a more intense form of anger than ***chemah***, and even if ***tochachah*** is a less painful form of being disciplined than ***yissurim***, David prefers ***yissurim*** but not as part of ***chamatcha***, i.e. Your ***chemah***, the lesser degree of G'd's anger. Even though ***chemah*** is weaker as indicated by the fact that the word is feminine as opposed to ***ketzef*** and ***aph***, David still feels it is more than he can bear.

3. David says that he has already been struck by G'd's "arrows", and G'd's hand has lain heavily upon him. These "arrows" were sent from heaven to wipe out his guilt, and before they have even started to achieve their purpose "Your hand has come to rest on me" i.e. I have experienced some of Your mercy. This has had the effect of bandaging my wounds.

4. Nonetheless, this has had such a profound effect on me that my flesh and bones are unable to be at peace even if only a mild form of Your anger has been poured on me, i.e. ***za-amecha***. All this

ג יְהוָה אַל-בְּקִצְפְּךָ תוֹכִיחֵנִי וּבַחֲמָתְךָ תְיַסְּרֵנִי׃
ד כִּי-חִצֶּיךָ נִחֲתוּ-בִי וַתִּנְחַת עָלַי יָדֶךָ׃
ה אֵין-מְתֹם בִּבְשָׂרִי מִפְּנֵי זַעְמֶךָ אֵין-שָׁלוֹם בַּעֲצָמַי
מִפְּנֵי חַטָּאתִי׃
ו כִּי-עֲוֹנֹתַי עָבְרוּ רֹאשִׁי כְּמַשָּׂא כָּבֵד יִכְבְּדוּ מִמֶּנִּי׃
ז הִבְאִישׁוּ נָמַקּוּ חַבּוּרֹתָי מִפְּנֵי אִוַּלְתִּי׃
ח נַעֲוֵיתִי שַׁחֹתִי עַד-מְאֹד כָּל-הַיּוֹם קֹדֵר הִלָּכְתִּי׃
ט כִּי-כְסָלַי מָלְאוּ נִקְלֶה וְאֵין מְתֹם בִּבְשָׂרִי׃
י נְפוּגֹתִי וְנִדְכֵּיתִי עַד-מְאֹד שָׁאַגְתִּי מִנַּהֲמַת לִבִּי׃

when dealing with *chatotai*, my unintentional sin. How could I possibly stand up to being punished for my *avonot*, intentional sins? In other words, how could I possibly survive your *ketzef*?

5. Should You reply "how do you know that your punishment thus far had been only in respect of your unintentional sin, and not for the sins you committed knowingly", i.e. *avon*? David answers that if these expressions of G'd's anger he had experienced had been on account of his intentional sins, they would "have gone over my head", would have submerged me totally, just as a load which is too heavy for me would have broken me.

6. Since my injuries resulted in my flesh rotting away, I know that this is only because of my unintentional sins, i.e. "my foolishness". Had these afflictions been due to my intentional sins, the injuries would have remained painful much longer, would not have started to heal.

7. If You were to say to me "how can you possibly cope with the afflictions you will suffer on account of your intentional sins, whose painful marks on your flesh will not heal speedily", I can only reply that ever since I committed such sins I have suffered such mental anguish that I cringed and was bowed down and walked in downcast spirit.

8–9. David describes his suffering and hints at the power of impurity, i.e. *nikleh*, how he as become contemptible, i.e. a "lightweight". The masculine usage of *nikleh* instead of *niklah* makes it plain that it refers to the intentional sin *avon*, which is also always masculine, strong.

The expression *kessolai mal-u nikleh*, my loins were filled with *nikleh* is indicative of someone who has placed too much emphasis

10O LORD, You are aware of all my entreaties; my groaning is not hidden from You.
11My mind reels; my strength fails me; my eyes too have lost their luster.
12My friends and companions stand back from my affliction; my kinsmen stand far off.
13Those who seek my life lay traps; those who wish me harm speak malice; they utter deceit all the time.
14But I am like a deaf man, unhearing, like a dumb man who cannot speak up;
15I am like one who does not hear, who has no retort on his lips.
16But I wait for You, O LORD; You will answer, O LORD, my God.

on the activities of his loins, i.e. a hint at the sin with Bat Sheva.

David says to G'd that He should not think that his entire concern is with the physical discomfort and pain he has suffered, and not about the distance that has separated him from G'd on account of his sin. Since his physical suffering subsided, he would have felt relieved, at ease, – if only the physical pain had bothered him. However, "I groaned from the moaning of my heart", i.e. I was MORE depressed when my body experienced relief because my heart, i.e. my spiritual problems bothered me even more.

10. My whole ***ta-avah***, yearning is that You G'd do not remove Yourself from me, that my sighs are not hidden from You. The term ***adon***, as usual, refers to the ***Shechinah***, Divine Presence. The ***shagah*** is not only a groaning from the lips outwards, but includes the ***anachah***, the sigh, an expression emanating from the heart itself. The term ***negdecha***, opposite You is unusual, we would have expected ***adonay ALECHA kol ta-avati.*** We know that the merits of the ***tzaddik*** in our domain promote the unity of G'd's great name in the celestial regions. When there is ***avon***, sin, the ***tzaddik*** is unable to promote that unity, i.e. to make his contribution to the unity of the name of G'd. David prays that he will be able to make this contribution to the unity of the name of G'd, therefore he requests forgiveness. (Berachot 58 teaches that ***anachah***, sigh, breaks a person's body in half)

The expression ***adonay ALECHA*** would mean that the supplicant is content to view G'd as always "above", whereas ***negdecha***

י אֲדֹנָי נֶגְדְּךָ כָל תַּאֲוָתִי וְאַנְחָתִי מִמְּךָ לֹא נִסְתָּרָה:
יא לִבִּי סְחַרְחַר עֲזָבַנִי כֹחִי וְאוֹר עֵינַי גַּם-הֵם אֵין אִתִּי:
יב אֹהֲבַי וְרֵעַי מִנֶּגֶד נִגְעִי יַעֲמֹדוּ וּקְרֹבַי מֵרָחֹק עָמָדוּ:
יג וַיְנַקְּשׁוּ מְבַקְשֵׁי נַפְשִׁי וְדֹרְשֵׁי רָעָתִי דִּבְּרוּ הַוּוֹת
וּמִרְמוֹת כָּל-הַיּוֹם יֶהְגּוּ:
יד וַאֲנִי כְּחֵרֵשׁ לֹא אֶשְׁמָע וּכְאִלֵּם לֹא יִפְתַּח-פִּיו:
טו וָאֱהִי כְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא-שֹׁמֵעַ וְאֵין בְּפִיו תּוֹכָחוֹת:
טז כִּי-לְךָ יְהוָה הוֹחָלְתִּי אַתָּה תַּעֲנֶה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהָי:

suggests that the kind of relationship desired is one in which man sees himself as vis a vis G'd so to speak.

11. Not only my body but my heart beats so rapidly that I lose my strength and even my eyesight. All this is due to my heart's feeling that a gulf has opened between me and G'd.

12. Those who are my friends will stand across from me. They are not sure if I am dead or have merely fainted, but looking at my *nega*, plague, cannot account for my state, since the actual physical plague has already subsided.

13. Then, those who have always sought my life and have sought to hurt me, laid snares and they stumbled. They could not wait till I was dead, but kept enquiring from my loyal friends what my afflictions were etc. Instead of waiting to receive a reply, they immediately proceeded to say that it was the sins that have caused David's misfortune, in addition to the *mirmot*, deceits they have anyways accused me of all day long. (already previously)

14. The reason they spoke with such assurance was that I acted as if I was deaf and dumb, and could not open my mouth.

15. I only ACTED as if I did not hear, as if my mouth could not rebut them. Though I had answers, I did not know how to use these answers.

16. The reason I did not reply was so that You G'd should respond on my behalf, since I hoped towards You.

Alternately, I hoped that the suffering I had undergone without complaining would enable You to reply to my adversaries, saying that You are the Lord my G'd, that my former relationship with You had been re-established.

17. An additional reason for my silence was that if I told them how I had suffered, they would rejoice in seeing my foot slip, and they

[17]For I fear they will rejoice over me; when my foot gives way they will vaunt themselves against me.
[18]For I am on the verge of collapse; my pain is always with me.
[19]I acknowledge my iniquity;
[20]I am fearful over my sin; for my mortal enemies are numerous; my treacherous foes are many.
[21]Those who repay evil for good harass me for pursuing good.

[22]Do not abandon me, O LORD; my God, be not far from me;
[23]hasten to my aid, O Lord, my deliverance.

39 *For the leader; for Jeduthun. A psalm of David.*
[2]I resolved I would watch my step lest I offend by my speech; I would keep my mouth muzzled while the wicked man was in my presence.

would magnify themselves over me. What would they say if I admitted how desperately sick I really felt!

18. The same would happen if I denied the seriousness of my affliction and told them that I had been entitled to marry Bat Sheva, i.e. ***letzela nachon***, (Eve had been constructed from Adam's side), that Bat Sheva had been meant for me, but that nevertheless I am sorry that I had given the impression of committing adultery and that my present pain and weakness was due to that, this would mean that it is not a serious affliction that only my dignity had suffered.

19. Or should I confess to them and admit that I had committed the sin they had accused me of and that that sin had brought me to my present sorry state? If I did this, I would reinforce their guilt seeing that in fact I have not legally been guilty. (compare Shabbat 56)

Or, – how can I confess to a sin which is only between me and G'd, since the Talmud in Yuma 86 tells us not to make public one's private sins vis a vis G'd? All of these considerations have prompted me to keep silent.

20. David refers to the possibility of telling his enemies of his technical innocence i.e. ***ani letzela nachon***, (verse 18) and says that if he were to pursue that line he would only strengthen and increase

יז כִּי-אָמַרְתִּי פֶּן-יִשְׂמְחוּ-לִי בְּמוֹט רַגְלִי עָלַי הִגְדִּילוּ:
יח כִּי-אֲנִי לְצֶלַע נָכוֹן וּמַכְאוֹבִי נֶגְדִּי תָמִיד:
יט כִּי-עֲוֹנִי אַגִּיד אֶדְאַג מֵחַטָּאתִי:
כ וְאֹיְבַי חַיִּים עָצְמוּ וְרַבּוּ שׂנְאַי שָׁקֶר:
כא וּמְשַׁלְּמֵי רָעָה תַּחַת טוֹבָה יִשְׂטְנוּנִי תַּחַת רָדְפִי-טוֹב:
כב אַל-תַּעַזְבֵנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהַי אַל-תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנִּי:
כג חוּשָׁה לְעֶזְרָתִי אֲדֹנָי תְּשׁוּעָתִי:

לט

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לִידִיתוּן מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
ב אָמַרְתִּי אֶשְׁמְרָה דְרָכַי מֵחֲטוֹא בִלְשׁוֹנִי אֶשְׁמְרָה לְפִי מַחְסוֹם בְּעוֹד רָשָׁע לְנֶגְדִּי:

the number of his enemies who would falsely accuse him, i.e. *chayim otzemu*, those who want his life, will become strengthened.

21. To the possible objection that David's lifestyle up to then had been immaculate, that he had been concerned only with the pursuit of Torah, and that therefore his reply would have to be taken at face value, – he says that this simply is not so. The fact that his enemies are in the habit of paying back evil for good, precludes their accepting such statements from him. They view his sin as TYPICAL of him, whereas any good deeds David had performed they perceive of as the windowdressing to make him appear devout, i.e. *rodfi tov*. This is why David says *yistenyeni* they will hate me with a *nun*, i.e. they make me out to be Satan, rather than *yistemeyni* with the usual letter *mem*.

22. David expresses his conviction that G'd will neither abandon him nor distance Himself from him.

23. However, he is in need of G'd hastening to his assistance. He does not ask for special favours, only that G'd should prove to be the immediate source of his salvation, i.e. *adonay*, the *Shechinah* should again be with him as previously. (Bereshit Rabbah 19,6 describes G'd's desire to dwell in our domain. This is why the term *adonay* for the *Shechinah* is so appropriate.)

Psalm 39

2. David describes that whenever his heart saw something that

[3]*I was dumb, silent; I was very still while my pain was intense.*
[4]*My mind was in a rage, my thoughts were all aflame; I spoke out:*
[5]*Tell me, O LORD, what my term is, what is the measure of my days; I would know how fleeting my life is.*
[6]*You have made my life just handbreadths long; its span is as nothing in Your sight; no man endures any longer than a breath.* Selah
[7]*Man walks about as a mere shadow; mere futility is his hustle and bustle, amassing and not knowing who will gather in.*
[8]*What, then, can I count on, O LORD?*
In You my hope lies.

could arouse a doubt about G'd's justice, he told himself to be careful and not to SAY so and sin thereby; this especially when the subject was the *tzaddik* and his suffering and the wicked and his success. As long as the successful evil doers did not actually come face to face with David, this method was sufficient to restrain him from questioning or criticizing G'd.

However, when David found himself face to face with such successful sinners he needed to put a *machsom*, muzzle on his mouth. (to prevent himself from speaking out) It was as if his TONGUE had already formulated such thoughts, but he had to prevent them from escaping his lips.

3. When he saw himself stricken with afflictions so that it silenced him, i.e. prevented him from studying Torah (compare Ezekiel 24.17 "silence your groan") David says that he felt that the spiritual good that he hoped to derive from the afflictions were negated by the overpowering nature of these afflictions. As a result, his pain to see the wicked successful welled up in him and burned like fire.

4–5. Then "I found it too difficult to restrain my tongue, and questioned G'd asking Him to inform me about *kitzi*, my final destination. I wanted to know what my specific task was in this life, so that I could know to attain it. I wanted to know if I would have enough time, *midat yamay* to achieve that goal. By knowing this (how long I would live) I would know how much time I had already wasted instead of trying to reach my objective. If I had this information, it would prevent me from questioning G'd's justice."

ג נֶאֱלַמְתִּי דוּמִיָּה הֶחֱשֵׁיתִי מִטּוֹב וּכְאֵבִי נֶעְכָּר׃
ד חַם-לִבִּי בְּקִרְבִּי בַּהֲגִיגִי תִבְעַר-אֵשׁ דִּבַּרְתִּי בִלְשׁוֹנִי׃
ה הוֹדִיעֵנִי יְהוָה קִצִּי וּמִדַּת יָמַי מַה הִיא אֵדְעָה מֶה-
חָדֵל אָנִי׃
ו הִנֵּה טְפָחוֹת נָתַתָּה יָמַי וְחֶלְדִּי כְאַיִן נֶגְדֶּךָ אַךְ-כָּל-
הֶבֶל כָּל-אָדָם נִצָּב סֶלָה׃
ז אַךְ-בְּצֶלֶם יִתְהַלֶּךְ-אִישׁ אַךְ-הֶבֶל יֶהֱמָיוּן יִצְבֹּר וְלֹא-
יֵדַע מִי-אֹסְפָם׃
ח וְעַתָּה מַה-קִּוִּיתִי אֲדֹנָי תּוֹחַלְתִּי לְךָ הִיא׃

6. I have restrained myself from speaking about the good experienced by the wicked. But I am upset about all the people who are NOT wicked, and who, because they do not know when they will die, are liable to leave the earth without having fulfilled their mission, their G'd given tasks.

In my own case for instance, You have made my days like handbreadths, ***tefachot***, i.e. minute periods. Even though they are composed of years from Adam, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph (all of whom died somewhat prior to their original life expectancy as we know from Zohar 16,2), I have been allocated a total of 70 years. I am in the fortunate position of knowing my allocation. Nonetheless I feel that my ***cheled***, life span is totally inadequate relative to the tasks assigned me. I am nothing when compared with You.

What shall all those people do, who, unlike me do not have an assurance that they will live at least 70 years and will have a chance to reach their respective perfection during that period? Nearly everyone is ***hevel***, lives under the vain illusion that he will have lots of time before he dies, ***nitzav selah*** to complete his task!!

7. We have read in the Zohar 217 that starting 30 days before his death, even the ***tzaddik***'s shadow keeps decreasing, i.e. that instead of 2 shadows he remains with only one shadow. (some versions state that their shadow becomes darker) It seems prudent for everyone with some intelligence, that at that point in their lives they should forego their preoccupation with mundane activities and concentrate instead on Torah related matters. Thus they could improve their merits if they had not done so in the prime of their lives. David laments the fact that people ignore such considerations, and continue to pile up money even though they clearly walk with one

9*Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not*
the butt of the benighted.
10*I am dumb, I do not speak up, for it is Your doing.*
11*Take away Your plague from me; I perish from Your*
blows.
12*You chastise a man in punishment for his sin,*
consuming like a moth what he treasures.
No man is more than a breath. Selah
13*Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my cry; do not*
disregard my tears; for like all my forebears I am an
alien, resident with You.

shadow only. They still pursue these vanities. They do so even if they have no children to leave all their money to, i.e. *velo yeyda mi ossfam*!

8. Now that all these afflictions have come upon me, so that not only do I not amass money, but I am even incapable of studying Torah, all that is left for me to hope for is for the *Shechinah*, i.e. *adonay* to join me. My hope is in You, i.e. that You reciprocate my longing for Your nearness.

When I asked *hodi-eyni kitzi*, this is what I had in mind. Confirm that in the end I will cleave to You.

9. David reverts to the comment in verse 3, that the afflictions he had undergone, had silenced him, had prevented him from studying Torah, ever. He says that assuming he is being punished for his sins, *pesha-ay*, he can list some types of sins he is certainly not guilty of. An example is his refraining from donating charity. Such a sin would be equivalent to idol worship. (since the Torah uses the expression *beliyaal* both for idol worshippers and for people who hate to give charity.) (compare Ketuvot 68)

He asks G'd forgiveness, since he is neither guilty of idol worship nor of failure to practice charity, something that he would have regarded as *cherpah naval*, shameful of the lowest order. He had always practiced charity. (compare Chronicles I 18,14)

10. If he was being punished for lack of Torah study, he says that he had been physically unable to study Torah due to his afflictions. (The Talmud Berachot 5 suggests that if upon examining oneself and one's deeds one cannot account for the punishments one experiences, the chances are that the reason is lack of Torah study.

11. In the previous hymn, David had asked not to be disciplined by such agents of G'd's anger as *ketzef, aph, chemah* and *za-am*, but to

ט מִכָּל-פִּשְׁעַי הַצִּילֵנִי חֶרְפַּת נָבָל אַל תְּשִׂימֵנִי׃
י נֶאֱלַמְתִּי לֹא אֶפְתַּח-פִּי כִּי אַתָּה עָשִׂיתָ׃
יא הָסֵר מֵעָלַי נִגְעֶךָ מִתִּגְרַת יָדְךָ אֲנִי כָלִיתִי׃
יב בְּתוֹכָחוֹת עַל-עָוֹן יִסַּרְתָּ אִישׁ וַתֶּמֶס כָּעָשׁ חֲמוּדוֹ אַךְ
הֶבֶל כָּל-אָדָם סֶלָה׃
יג שִׁמְעָה תְפִלָּתִי יְהוָה וְשַׁוְעָתִי הַאֲזִינָה אֶל-דִּמְעָתִי
אַל-תֶּחֱרַשׁ כִּי גֵר אָנֹכִי עִמָּךְ תוֹשָׁב כְּכָל-אֲבוֹתָי׃

be punished by G'd directly. This G'd had done. There is no doubt in David's mind that some sin of his had created such a force resulting in G'd's anger, i.e. *koach rogez*. He hopes that G'd personally will subdue this force his sin had created. All these forces referred to in the kabbalah as *chitzoni-im*, external, i.e. not germaine to something spiritually wholesome, are known as *nega-im*, as we know from Samuel II 7,14 "I will chasten him with man made *nega-im*, plagues, troubles." David asks that the power of these *nega-im be removed, since he had already suffered mitigrat yadecha*, from the blow of Your hand.

12. If – on the other hand, – his afflictions are only designed to warn others not to sin and his experience is supposed to serve as an object lesson, he says that this seems futile, since people do not learn such lessons by what happens to others. Even when You punish man for his OWN sin, i.e. *betochachot al avon issarta ish*, even when You made all that he held dear melt like a moth, i.e. *vatemess ka-osh chamudo*, he continued to pursue vain things as always, i.e. *ach hevel kol adam selah*.

13. We know that *shemi-ah* refers to hearing things that are distant, whereas *ha-azanah* refers to hearing things which are close by. (compare chapter 17, verse 1) Moses used *ha-azinu*, when addressing the heavens which he felt close to (Deut. 32,1).

David distinguished between 3 types of appeal to G'd. They are 1) *tefillah*, 2) *shav-ah*, 3) *dima-ah*. He says that even if at the time he commences his prayer (tefillah), G'd may still be distant from him, by the time he pleads (shav-ah), G'd may have come nearer already. Once he cries (dim-ah) there is no need to ask that G'd should come near, should not remain silent and unresponsive.

Though from the vantage point of my soul, I am a stranger with You in this terrestrial world, I am supposed to be the carrier of the *merkavah* Divine entourage in this world. As to my body, I am a

14 *Look away from me, that I may recover, before I pass away and am gone.*

40 *For the leader. A psalm of David.*
2 *I put my hope in the LORD; He inclined toward me, and heeded my cry.*
3 *He lifted me out of the miry pit, the slimy clay, and set my feet on a rock, steadied my legs.*

resident stranger *kechol avotay*, like all my forefathers (the patriarchs). I am NOT like other kings who rule over nations, making their stay in this world their prime concern in life. Rather, I am like all my forefathers who have not been kings. Both Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had moved from country to country, from residence in one location to residence in another location. They had not been *ezrachim*, natural born permanent citizens. Even to the extent that David was a *toshav*, this status was no more indicative of serene attachment to his roots on earth than that of his illustrious forebears.

14. Now he spells out his request in detail "Turn from me, so that I can regain my strength", i.e. *ve-avligah*. David does not ask for the afflictions to cease totally, since he is happy with the afflictions in principle. But he requests a breathing spell between bouts of pain before he would find them unbearable, *beterem elech ve-eyneni*, before they would cause him to resent or question G'd's justice. If that were to happen, "I would leave this life to disappear", i.e. would not die righteous.

Psalm 40

2. On the verse "hail to the man who keeps waiting at My door day after day... for when he finds Me he finds life", (Proverbs 8, 34–35) we have explained that the Zohar applies this to Isaiah 50,2 (compare Berachot 6) "why did I come and there was no one there, I called and no one answered", that the subject matter under discussion are people who stand in the synagogues and houses of study, the places where G'd can always be found with His children (the people of Israel).

The prophet or composer of the book of Proverbs uses the parable of a king who has invited his counsellors to meet him in a certain place, and who expects them to be in attendance by the time he arrives. When he does find the counsellors assembled, he is

יד הָשַׁע מִמֶּנִּי וְאַבְלִיגָה בְטֶרֶם אֵלֵךְ וְאֵינֶנִּי׃

מ

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר׃
ב קַוֹּה קִוִּיתִי יְהוָה וַיֵּט אֵלַי וַיִּשְׁמַע שַׁוְעָתִי׃
ג וַיַּעֲלֵנִי מִבּוֹר שָׁאוֹן מִטִּיט הַיָּוֵן וַיָּקֶם עַל-סֶלַע רַגְלַי
כּוֹנֵן אֲשֻׁרָי׃

happy, when he finds that not even a single one of his counsellors has arrived as yet, he becomes very angry.

If he finds at least one of his advisors present, he consoles himself, and amuses himself while waiting for the others to arrive. He displays special love for the counsellor who had deemed it worthwhile to be there before the king's arrival.

David may refer to an instance such as the one in the parable, when he had been the only one who had arrived on time, before G'd's Presence was ready to manifest itself, i.e. *kavoh kiviti Hashem.* As a result, *vayet elay* etc., "G'd inclined towards me and He heard my pleas".

This is the reason that a special relationship of mutual love had been established between G'd and David. It reflects itself in the fact that "my pleas to G'd need no intermediary to reach him". "He listens directly to MY entreaties", i.e. *va-yishma shav-ati.*

A possible reason for the unusual formula *lamnatzeach leDavid mizmor* could be this. We know from the Zohar, and we have explained on Psalms 3,6 – that when the holy spirit came to rest on David before he commenced to compose a hymn, the formula is *mizmor le-David.* When David waited until the holy spirit came to him, the formula is *le-David mizmor.*

Sometimes a musical instrument called *lamnatzeach* is employed to hasten the arrival of the *ruach hakodesh*, holy spirit.

We find that when Isaac prayed for Rebeccah to become pregnant (Genesis 25,21) that on the one hand we have the active form of the word he prayed, i.e. *va-yetar*, on the other hand G'd's response is couched in the same verb, using the passive form *va-ye-atar lo.* It was as if G'd had only waited for Isaac to initiate this prayer in order to be able to respond.

G'd's response was almost AUTOMATIC, needed only to be released by Isaac's prayer, so to speak. Here too, G'd's response to David was that He activated the strings of his instrument by making

[4]He put a new song into my mouth, a hymn to our God. May many see it and stand in awe, and trust in the LORD.
[5]Happy is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who turns not to the arrogant or to followers of falsehood.

the North wind blow, which led to the immediate arrival of the holy spirit in David.

David explains this unusual occurrence as being due to *kavo kiviti*, his intense and concentrated striving for G'd's spirit to come to him. The *kavoh* refers to G'd's longing for David, whereas the *kiviti* refers to David's longing for G'd. The mutuality of this longing resulted in *vayet elay*, G'd inclined towards me even before I uttered my plea. Subsequently, *vayishma shav-ati*, He heard my plea.

3. Just as G'd rescued the Jewish people in Egypt PERSONALLY, i.e. *va-avarti be-eretz mitzrayim* (*ani ve lo malach*) (Exodus 12,12, compare Jerusalem Talmud Sanhedrin 2,1) "I shall pass through Egypt, (I myself, not an angel), so G'd raised me from the pit of *sha-on*, i.e. from Goliath who had roared (*sha-on*) his blasphemies. (Samuel I chapter 17) Also from another site of impurity, i.e. the palace of Achish the king of Gat (Philistines). "He raised me from *tit yaven*, muddy clay, i.e. Goliath's brother. (Achish was a brother of Goliath). Goliath is viewed as the *bor* pit, Achish as the muddy slime in the pit.

Another place G'd had rescued, i.e. raised David from personally, is described in Samuel I 23,25–29, when Saul heard about the Philistines invading Israel proper and left off pursuing David, though he had almost certainly captured him.

The *selah* rock, is the *selah machlekut* described here. David had been so exhausted when he reached that point that he did not have the strength left to escape, especially when he had become aware that his hideout had been betrayed. G'd had lifted him from the rock, to enable him to descend on the other side of the side Saul was about to climb.

David credits G'd directly with having given life to his feet which had been like dead. Previously G'd had raised him to that rock. During the time David descended, the messenger had time to inform Saul about the Philistine invasion.

4. Up until now, David had credited G'd's great 4 lettered name *hashem* with the salvation he had experienced. Since there was no proof of this, he adds that the very fact he had been inspired to compose this song of gratitude is proof of his contention that the great name of G'd had been at work in all this. David refers to Psalm

ד וַיִּתֵּן בְּפִי שִׁיר חָדָשׁ תְּהִלָּה לֵאלֹהֵינוּ יִרְאוּ רַבִּים
וְיִירָאוּ וְיִבְטְחוּ בַּיהוָה:
ה אַשְׁרֵי הַגֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר-שָׂם יְהוָה מִבְטַחוֹ וְלֹא-פָנָה אֶל-
רְהָבִים וְשָׂטֵי כָזָב:

18, the words of which had come to him by inspiration, but which he had not uttered previously. This is why he can refer to them now as *shir chadash*, a new song, one he had not sung yet.

Had this song originated in his own heart, even though he had not uttered it yet, he could not have described it as "new".

When Samuel II 22,1 describes David as "speaking" the song instead of "singing" it, this is further proof that it had been inspired by G'd. All David had been able to contribute was to utter its words. He had not invented, i.e. composed it.

David tries to tell us here that from the song which G'd had placed in his mouth it is clear that G'd, i.e. the great name *hashem* had worked the *yeshuah*, salvation. The word *hashem* occurs 19 times in that chapter. (Psalms 18) Clearly, every step in David's salvation is credited to *hashem*.

In the event someone should accuse David of conceit for claiming that the great name of G'd had placed this song in his mouth, and that it was not a manifestation of a lesser of G'd's attributes, he says that it is a source of praise, *tehillah* to *elokeynu* OUR G'd, i.e. not only for him but for the whole of Israel. The reason the "great" name of G'd inspired that song was to inspire reverence and faith in His name amongst all of Israel.

5. Also an individual such as himself is greatly uplifted when he realizes that his faith had been warranted, i.e. *ashrey hagever asher sam* etc., hail to the one who has placed his faith etc.

We have explained that the significance of these salvations lay in the fact that neither Saul's men had to kill fellow Jews, nor did David or his men have to kill Saul or any of his men. The essential part of their faith in the great name of G'd had been that they would be saved without having to resort to shedding Jewish blood.

They could have relied on *re-havim*, the arrogant, who would have cited the Talmud Sanhedrin 72 to them, which states "if someone plans to kill you you should pre-empt him, and kill him first". This would have been a perfectly LEGAL argument. David had not needed to accept this argument by the *satey chazav*, those who turn to deceit, as Saul had done when he pursued David in order to secure

6*You, O LORD my God, have done many things; the wonders You have devised for us cannot be set out before You; I would rehearse the tale of them, but they are more than can be told.*

the succession of the throne for his sons or sons. (Yevamot 76). He had been told that David was halachically unfit to become king, since he was of Moabite descent.

All that G'd had done for him teaches Israel not to act in the manner Saul had acted.

6. Having listed all the individual acts of kindness he had experienced at the hands of G'd (in Psalm 18), David emphasizes here that G'd had performed numerous acts of salvation i.e. *rabot assita* for him personally.

A human king, when he does exert himself on behalf of his people, does so when the interest of the multitude, the nation is at stake. He does not exert himself so much on behalf of a single individual subject. When he acts to save many, this results in glory for him, not so when he saves a single individual. Not so G'd. He exerts Himself also on behalf of a single individual, seeing that His standing as G'd is not dependent on the multitude at all. He is perfectly content to be called the G'd of an individual, i.e. *elokay*, MY G'd. He considered it worthwhile to create a whole universe for the sake of one individual. We are told in Berachot 6, that Rabbi Chelba said that a G'd fearing person is one whose prayers G'd responds to. He based himself on the verse in Eccles. 12,13 "fear the Lord for this is what humanity is all about". (free translation by the editor) In other words, it is worth creating man the species for the sake of the individual.

This is what David says here: "Although *rabot assita*, You are the One who has done so much, i.e. created an entire universe, You are still MY G'd", i.e. You relate to me on a one to one basis though I am only an individual.

When hearing this, man may raise several objections. 1) Why is the sentence not constructed with the subject at the beginning, i.e. "You have done many things, only at the end of the sentence "G'd", instead of the "many things have You done G'd? Why is the word *Hashem* only at the end of the line? 2) The expression *assita*, You have done, suggests that UNLESS G'd had completed a cycle of creation, i.e. *ma-asseh*, His mere thought *machashavah* would have been inadequate to produce the desired result.

3)Why are the deeds of G'd summarized by David under the

רַבּוֹת עָשִׂיתָ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהַי נִפְלְאֹתֶיךָ וּמַחְשְׁבֹתֶיךָ
אֵלֵינוּ אֵין עֲרֹךְ אֵלֶיךָ אַגִּידָה וַאֲדַבֵּרָה עָצְמוּ מִסַּפֵּר׃

anonymous *rabot*, many, why have they not been enumerated in detail?

Because of these criticisms David answers the first two questions saying *niflotecha u-mach-shevotecha eleynu*, Your miracles and thoughts are directed at us for our sake.

David says "I was right in saying You have done many things", and did not say "You have DONE many miracles" as would have been implied by the use of the name "G'd" at the beginning of the sentence. I was also right in referring to Your deeds as *assita*. Even though we Jews consider these deeds miracles performed on our behalf and for our sake, i.e. *eleynu*, these actions are marvellous ONLY from our point of view, seeing we are used to a universe that operates on "laws of physics", laws of "nature". From G'd's point of view, nothing He does is a miracle, it is plain *assiyah*, deed.

Compare the Talmud Taanit 25 which sees nothing special in the fact that "He who can tell oil to burn can also tell vinegar to burn", i.e. act as fuel.

It follows that one cannot ascribe to G'd's deeds which are miraculous by definition, they are miraculous only from a human point of view, i.e. *nifle-otecha eleynu*. Also, my having said *assita* is only usage of the word in human terms. Of course, when You want something done, You do not actually have to DO it, but *machashevotecha eleynu*, the differentiation between planning something and actually doing it, is only *eleynu*, something applicable to us humans. When You intend something to be done, it is done simultaneously with the thought occurring.

Execution does not need to be preceded by planning, even. Concerning the third matter which bothers a person who reads my song, i.e. that I did not enumerate G'd's individual deeds of salvation on my behalf but lumped them all together by saying *rabot assita*, "You have done many things, my reason is similar to a story told about Rabbi Chaninah in Berachot, 33. The latter listened to a student reciting his prayers (as cantor) who listed a long list of Divine attributes in the first benediction of the *amidah*. (central prayer) When the student was finished, Rabbi Chaninah asked him if he had exhausted the list of G'd's attributes?

He told the student that we list only 3 of G'd's attributes (*hagadol, hagibor vehanorah*) since it was those that Moses used. The men of

7You gave me to understand that You do not desire sacrifice and meal offering; You do not ask for burnt offering and sin offering.
8Then I said, "See, I will bring a scroll recounting what befell me."
9To do what pleases You, my God, is my desire; Your teaching is in my inmost parts.
10I proclaimed [Your] righteousness in a great congregation; see, I did not withhold my words; O LORD, You must know it.
11I did not keep Your beneficence to myself; I declared Your faithful deliverance; I did not fail to speak of Your steadfast love in a great congregation.

the great assembly, when composing the prayers decided to include these 3 attributes in our *amidah*.

For the same considerations explained by Rabbi Chaninah, David refrained from listing all G'd's acts of kindness, in case he might forget one or more of them. He then would commit an offence against G'd instead of praising Him and thanking Him.

After all, it is IMPOSSIBLE for man to list all the credits due to G'd.

7. When Saul had excused not destroying some of the Amalekites' cattle and sheep, since the people had wanted to use them to bring sacrifices to G'd, Samuel had severely upbraided him. (Samuel I 15,21–22) He had explained that G'd was much less interested in sacrifices than in man's obedience. G'd wants man's EAR to listen to Him, so that he will not sin. This is what David explains in this verse. The reason the people realize how great You are, says David, is, that in spite of all You have done, you are NOT looking for man to offer You sacrifices in appreciation, unlike a human king, whose subjects express their appreciation of the king in presenting him with material offerings.

Since You have already opened my ears, i.e. *oznayim karito li*, the offerings have become of minor significance, if they are not designed to atone for sins committed. However, this rule does not include such thanksgiving offerings as the Passover and others specifically legislated in the Torah.

8. In connection with my volunteering to fight Goliath, (Samuel I 17,33) as a mere youngster, someone might accuse me of grandstanding, relying on miracles when I did not need to expose myself to danger. According to the Talmud Shabbat 32, such

ז זֶבַח וּמִנְחָה לֹא-חָפַצְתָּ אָזְנַיִם כָּרִיתָ לִי עוֹלָה וַחֲטָאָה
לֹא שָׁאָלְתָּ:
ח אָז אָמַרְתִּי הִנֵּה-בָאתִי בִּמְגִלַּת-סֵפֶר כָּתוּב עָלָי:
ט לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנְךָ אֱלֹהַי חָפָצְתִּי וְתוֹרָתְךָ בְתוֹךְ מֵעָי:
י בִּשַּׂרְתִּי צֶדֶק בְּקָהָל רָב הִנֵּה שְׂפָתַי לֹא אֶכְלָא יְהוָה
אַתָּה יָדָעְתָּ:
יא צִדְקָתְךָ לֹא-כִסִּיתִי בְתוֹךְ לִבִּי אֱמוּנָתְךָ וּתְשׁוּעָתְךָ
אָמָרְתִּי לֹא כִחַדְתִּי חַסְדְּךָ וַאֲמִתְּךָ לְקָהָל רָב:

miracles even if performed, would result in my merits being diminished. David replies that he did not act as a show off, did not brag about his virtues, but had been predestined for such acts since Jacob had blessed Yehudah with the words "your hand will be on the neck of your enemies" (Genesis 49,9). Moreover, in the same blessing Yehudah is envisaged as the founder of a dynasty. This is what David means when he refers to ***megilat sefer***, i.e. something written in the Torah. He claims that he did not rely on miracles, that he did only what could be expected of him.

9. I did not do this in order to fulfil my glorious destiny, the one predicted for me in the Torah, but to carry out YOUR WILL, and to avenge You from the blasphemies uttered by Goliath. The prophecy in Your Torah, i.e. ***megilat sefer*** only acted as something that fortified my intestines prior to the confrontation, i.e. ***betoch me-ay***.

(The reason he thought he was the descendant of Yehudah referred to in Jacob's blessing may have been his previous experience of G'd's help when he killed a lion and a bear who had attacked his sheep. compare Samuel I 17,35–37. (editor's note))

10. You might reply that since I said that I had not wanted to demonstrate my merits when I fought Goliath, but had ONLY wanted to carry out Your will, how does my miraculous success prove my merit? i.e. why did I have to proclaim my ***tzedek*** righteousness, in public, i.e. ***bikhal rov***? (see Samuel I 17,37)

David says that his intent had not been to brag, that he had been unable to restrain his lips from making such a haughty sounding comment, though this had not been in his heart. He says "You G'd know that this is a fact".

11. Still confronting the accusation that he should not have ascribed his success with the lion and the bear to his own merit, but

12O LORD, You will not withhold from me Your compassion; Your steadfast love will protect me always.
13For misfortunes without number envelop me; my iniquities have caught up with me; I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; I am at my wits' end.
14O favor me, LORD, and save me; O LORD, hasten to my aid.
15Let those who seek to destroy my life be frustrated and disgraced; let those who wish me harm fall back in shame.

should not have mentioned it at all, David says that the reason he had mentioned it was to demonstrate Your ***tzedek***, i.e. that You have helped me. He had not mentioned the fact to show that he had merits, but to give credit to G'd His saviour. To the challenge that he should have credited the merit of the Jewish people with his miraculous victory, i.e. ***kehal rov*** being the factor which had been responsible for his success, David says that he had never denied this, i.e. ***lo kichadeti***, though he had failed to mention it at that time. He is well aware of the merit of ***kehal rov***. He knows that he had been the beneficiary of the accumulated merits of the people on whose behalf he had slain Goliath.

12. When a person is saved by the ***midat harachamim***, G'd's attribute of mercy, he had some merit; when he had been saved by G'd's ***chessed***, loving kindness and truth, he had not had any merit to his credit.

David says that he now has to pray that he will always have sufficient merit to qualify for the ***midat harachamim***. In order to enjoy G'd's ***chessed*** he does not have to pray at all, such kindness occurs unbidden, completely free, i.e. ***tamid yitzruni***. When G'd employs ***chessed*** to save a person, He does not debit his "merit" account, i.e. ***chessed*** is ***chinam***, free.

13. Our sages have urged people who suffer from afflictions to examine their previous lifestyle (Berachot 5). If someone cannot find fault with himself to account for the afflictions that he has been subjected to, they may be due to missed opportunities of Torah study.

The source for this is Psalms 94,12, "hail man whom G'd disciplines and You will teach him from Your Torah" Our sages also said that man's sins close his heart, (according to Alshich's version "his eyes") causing hin to sin further. (Yuma 39)

יג אַתָּה יְהוָה לֹא-תִכְלָא רַחֲמֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי חַסְדְּךָ וַאֲמִתְּךָ
תָּמִיד יִצְּרוּנִי:
יד כִּי אָפְפוּ עָלַי רָעוֹת עַד-אֵין מִסְפָּר הִשִּׂיגוּנִי עֲוֹנֹתַי
וְלֹא-יָכֹלְתִּי לִרְאוֹת עָצְמוּ מִשַּׂעֲרוֹת רֹאשִׁי וְלִבִּי
עֲזָבָנִי:
טו רְצֵה-יְהוָה לְהַצִּילֵנִי יְהוָה לְעֶזְרָתִי חוּשָׁה:
טז יֵבֹשׁוּ וְיַחְפְּרוּ יַחַד מְבַקְשֵׁי נַפְשִׁי לִסְפוֹתָהּ יִסֹּגוּ
אָחוֹר וְיִכָּלְמוּ חֲפֵצֵי רָעָתִי:

This is what surrounds him with troubles etc. so that he wastes away. (Isaiah 64,6) *Vatemugenu beyad avoneynu*, You have let us fade away by our very iniquities. David says that he has been set upon by innumerable troubles. In case someone were to tell him he should have examined his deeds as soon as trouble struck, he claims that the troubles followed one another at such a rapid clip that his eyes had already been stricken and he could not properly examine his past deeds.

Therefore, since he could not be faulted in that respect, it should not be considered an additional sin. *lo yacholti lirot*, I could not see.

Secondly, had he been given time he would have rectified his relatively minor sins. As it was, they have become major sins, seeing he had not had time to rectify his conduct, i.e. *atzemu*, they have become powerful, whereas they used to be as thin, as minute as *sa-arat roshi* the hairs on my head. Since David's heart had left him, i.e. did not work properly due to the afflictions, he does not accept additional guilt.

14. The dual *hatzileyni* and *le-ezrati chushah* is again a reference to the enemies who want to kill David, i.e. those who attack his body, and to his internal enemy (members of his own entourage) who tell him to kill his enemies and thereby he would incriminate his soul. David asks G'd for help from either enemy.

15. Let those internal enemies who urge me to kill my adversaries be put to shame and let them be confounded by Your help. Concerning those who want to kill me physically, *yisogu achor*, they will retreat backwards, *veyikolmu* and let all those who seek to do me harm be deeply embarrassed.

David prays that his enemies will do *teshuvah* when they see how G'd saves him. (Berachot 12, based on Ezekiel 16,63) (Yalkut Shimoni

16Let those who say "Aha! Aha!" over me be desolate because of their frustration.
17But let all who seek You be glad and rejoice in You; let those who are eager for Your deliverance always say, "Extolled be the LORD!"
18But I am poor and needy; may the LORD devise [deliverance] for me.
You are my help and my rescuer; my God, do not delay.

41 *For the leader. A psalm of David.*
2Happy is he who is thoughtful of the wretched; in bad times may the LORD keep him from harm.
3May the LORD guard him and preserve him; and may he be thought happy in the land.
Do not subject him to the will of his enemies.

Samuel item 140 quotes Samuel I 28,19, as the source when it views Ezekiel as applying only to communities whereas Samuel 28,19 proves that also the embarrassment of an individual over his sin results in his being forgiven)

Saul's regret and shame at having killed the priests in the city of Nov, and his subsequent failure to receive answers via the breastplate of the High priest, the *urim vetumim*, as well as his failure to receive responses from the prophets to his enquiries all combined to secure him forgiveness. Had this not been so, how could the apparition of Samuel have assured him that by the following evening he would join him in *gan eden* (his share of the hereafter) as soon as the Philistines had wounded him mortally. (compare Saul's encounter with the apparition of Samuel in Samuel I chapter 28.)

16. However, those who had exclaimed *he-ach, he-ach*, and who had feasted their eyes on my misfortune, (compare Psalms 35,21) require a greater degree of repentance for their sin. Therefore David prays that they become desolate *al ekev boshtom*, because it took them so long *ekev* to feel ashamed. (*ekev* in the sense that the Targum translates Genesis 3,16.)

17. Already at the beginning of this Psalm, David had said *kavoh-kiviti Hashem*, I had striven for the attribute of hashem, G'd's great name. He had not referred to the lesser manifestations of G'd as expressed in the name *adonay*, i.e. *adnut*, authority.

Here too, David appeals ONLY to THAT attribute of G'd. As G'd

טז יָשֹׂמּוּ עַל-עֵקֶב בָּשְׁתָּם הָאֹמְרִים לִי הֶאָח הֶאָח:
יז יָשִׂישׂוּ וְיִשְׂמְחוּ בְךָ כָּל-מְבַקְשֶׁיךָ יֹאמְרוּ תָמִיד יִגְדַּל
יְהוָה אֹהֲבֵי תְשׁוּעָתֶךָ:
יח וַאֲנִי עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן אֲדֹנָי יַחֲשָׁב לִי עֶזְרָתִי וּמְפַלְטִי
אַתָּה אֱלֹהַי אַל-תְּאַחַר:

מא א לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
ב אַשְׁרֵי מַשְׂכִּיל אֶל-דָּל בְּיוֹם רָעָה יְמַלְּטֵהוּ יְהוָה:
ג יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֵהוּ וִיחַיֵּהוּ יְאֻשַּׁר בָּאָרֶץ וְאַל-תִּתְּנֵהוּ
בְּנֶפֶשׁ אֹיְבָיו:

had responded to him in THAT capacity, so David states that all those who seek out G'd and will experience His salvation as an act of G'd's great name, have 2 reasons to rejoice, i.e. *yasissu veyissmechu* since they have been found worthy to experience G'd's response on that level. Normally, especially in exile, only G'd's 2 lettered name *yud heh* is manifest. Therefore, all those who experienced the 4 lettered name manifestation have twice the reason to be happy.

18. David himself dares not count himself amongst those so deserving. He is content if he will experience IMMEDIATE salvation even if only at the level of *adonay*, the 2 lettered name of the *Shechinah*. The reason he is content with this is that at least he can call G'd *elohay*, i.e. my personal G'd. But in return for this appeal to a reduced manifestation of G'd, David pleads *al te-achar* do not delay!

Psalm 41

2. The reference here is to Rabbi Akiva's daughter who had been slated to die a violent death on the night of her wedding, and who had been saved by an act of charity. (Shabbat 156 – compare details in our commentary on chapter 37 verse 40) – *Maskil el dal*, means that someone OTHERWISE OCCUPIED leaves his affairs to give his attention to the poor. In such a case, even *beyom ra-ah*, when the evil day is already upon him, such an act of charity can still forestall the evil decree.

3. Such a person will not only be saved from violent death, but

4The LORD will sustain him on his sickbed; You shall wholly transform his bed of suffering.
5I said, "O LORD, have mercy on me, heal me, for I have sinned against You."
6My enemies speak evilly of me, "When will he die and his name perish?"
7If one comes to visit, he speaks falsely; his mind stores up evil thoughts; once outside, he speaks them.

from death at that time altogether, i.e. *vi-yechayehyhu*, He will keep him alive. Not only that, but the life extension granted, will be a useful happy life.

David prays not to be delivered as atonement for the life of his enemies. If some *tzaddik* has to die in order to enable G'd to let the rest of the people of his city survive, do not let this charitable person be the one whose death prolongs the lives of his enemies. The reason David adds this prayer is, that the person in question had originally been meant to die already anyways, and his death now would not have deprived him of his regular life span.

4. So far, David had discussed the effect of a charitable act on someone who had already been slated to die according to his horoscope, but who had been perfectly healthy. Now David says that if a person had been subject to a heavenly decree to die, had taken ill, and as a result had repented, then, though he recovers from his illness no new death is required in his community to be an atonement for the surviving people in his town. His own recovery, since it was due to *teshuvah*, is considered by G'd as if he had died, i.e. had actually been the atonement for his community. This is what is meant in Isaiah 38,9 that "Hezekiah lived from his sickness". It means he was granted additional life due to the repentance he did while he had been sick.

The suffering he had experienced during his illness was offset against whatever sins he was to atone for. David says the same thing here about the *eres devoy*, the bed of languishing. His soul will be healed through the sickness his body experiences. *kol mishkavo*, as if his total lying down had taken place, i.e. as if he had actually died.

5. Some might argue that a *tzaddik*'s death would be more likely to catalyze his townspeople into penitence than his unexpected recovery. They would reason that the *tzaddik* had no doubt died because of a minor misdemeanor, seeing that G'd is very strict with *tzaddikim*. They would reason that the fate in store for them (the

ד יְהוָה יִסְעָדֶנּוּ עַל-עֶרֶשׂ דְּוָי כָּל-מִשְׁכָּבוֹ הָפַכְתָּ
בְחָלְיוֹ׃
ה אֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי יְהוָה חָנֵּנִי רְפָאָה נַפְשִׁי כִּי-חָטָאתִי לָךְ׃
ו אוֹיְבַי יֹאמְרוּ רַע לִי מָתַי יָמוּת וְאָבַד שְׁמוֹ׃
ז וְאִם-בָּא לִרְאוֹת שָׁוְא יְדַבֵּר לִבּוֹ יִקְבָּץ אָוֶן לוֹ יֵצֵא
לַחוּץ יְדַבֵּר׃

townspeople) would likely be much worse, and they would do *teshuvah*. (compare Nedarim 50)

To this argument David replies that the chances are that the survivors will think that the departed committed a serious sin, and that this is the reason G'd had to let him die, after first making him sick. David says that he can speak from personal experience. When he was sick, his enemies had put the worst possible interpretation on the fact that he had been stricken. David had said only *hashem chaneni refa-ah nafshi*, G'd grant me the favour and heal my soul, – since I was ready to let my body serve as atonement for my soul, *ki chatati loch*, for I had sinned against You. My enemies however, (verse 6) could not wait for me to die and to use my death as proof that I had died an unrepentant sinner.

6. You could argue that both the sickness of the *tzaddik* as well as his death achieve atonement for the people of his community, since while the *tzaddik* suffered the afflictions while sick, he actually atones for the people of his generation, and as soon as he dies he can act as advocate for them at the celestial court.

According to this argument, the *tzaddik*'s suffering during his illness had protected his peers from G'd's acts of retribution, whereas his death enables him to plead for his peers' forgiveness. David says that this is useful only if the sick person, – in this instance himself – had been recognized by his peers as a *tzaddik*.

Since his enemies did not view him in this light however, neither David's sickness nor his death would achieve the desired result for them. They are waiting for him to die as confirmation that they had been correct in considering him a confirmed sinner. This is proven by their saying *va-avad shemo*, may his name disappear, i.e. a fate reserved for the worst category of sinner. (compare Zohar)

7. If at least they would be forthright! However, if someone comes to visit me, David says, he pretends to fulfil the duty of visiting the sick, showing sympathy, whereas MY visitors only want to check on

8All my enemies whisper together against me, imagining the worst for me.
9"Something baneful has settled in him; he'll not rise from his bed again."
10My ally in whom I trusted, even he who shares my bread, has been utterly false to me.
11But You, O LORD, have mercy on me; let me rise again and repay them.
12Then shall I know that You are pleased with me; when my enemy cannot shout in triumph over me.
13You will support me because of my integrity, and let me abide in Your presence forever.

how miserable I feel. This is what is meant by *ve-im ba lirot*, he only wants to confirm how badly I feel. *shav yedabber*, the wishes he expressed for my recovery do not reflect what his heart is thinking. He may SAY that he feels sorry for my plight, is even ready to die in my place if it would make me well, – but he does not mean it. His heart, *yikbatz oven*, becomes full of the evil which he has not been able to release verbally. When he cannot contain his true feelings any longer, *yetze lachutz*, he goes outside, *yedabber*, and there he reveals his true feelings.

8. All this is true when a single individual (of my enemies) comes to see me. When they come in groups, they whisper hateful things to each other, even in my presence. Their wickedness is truly great, since they wish me ill even in my presence.

9. They do not allow for the possibility that I have become sick in order to purge the sin of Bat Sheva from me, and for my eventual recovery to indicate that I have been forgiven; rather, *davar beli-ya-al yatzuk bo* (from the word *metzukkah*, distress) they state that I have been subjected to distress because of a major transgression on my part. *Va-asher shachav*, they claim that I will die soon since the sin with Bat Sheva *asher shachav*, with whom he lay, included *chilul hashem*, the public desecration of the name of the Lord, a sin which cannot be forgiven until the sinner has actually died. Therefore they say *lo yosif lakum*, he will not recover.

10. Indeed G'd, says David, I do not accuse those who consider my sins as so serious, but even a man with whom I was at peace, i.e. whom I trusted and who ate at my table, i.e. whose salary I pay has lifted his heel against me. David refers to his general Yoav (Samuel II 11,14)

ח יַחַד עָלַי יִתְלַחָשׁוּ כָּל שֹׂנְאָי עָלַי יַחְשְׁבוּ רָעָה לִי:
ט דְּבַר-בְּלִיַּעַל יָצוּק בּוֹ וַאֲשֶׁר שָׁכַב לֹא-יוֹסִיף לָקוּם:
י גַּם אִישׁ-שְׁלוֹמִי אֲשֶׁר-בָּטַחְתִּי בּוֹ אוֹכֵל לַחְמִי הִגְדִּיל
עָלַי עָקֵב:
יא וְאַתָּה יְהוָה חָנֵּנִי וַהֲקִימֵנִי וַאֲשַׁלְּמָה לָהֶם:
יב בְּזֹאת יָדַעְתִּי כִּי-חָפַצְתָּ בִּי כִּי לֹא-יָרִיעַ אֹיְבִי עָלָי:
יג וַאֲנִי בְּתֻמִּי תָּמַכְתָּ בִּי וַתַּצִּיבֵנִי לְפָנֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם:

Yoav, instead of keeping David's secret, had shown the letter in which David had ordered him to place Uriah, Bat Sheva's former husband in an exposed position at the front, to one and all. David has this also in mind, when he tells his son Solomon on his deathbed not to let Yoav die in peace. (Kings I 2,5. see Rashi quoting Tanchumah)

higdil alay eykev. Yoav's action made the whole matter a *chilul hashem*, public desecration of G'd's name. Had he been discreet, there would not have been a *chilul hashem*, or at least only marginally.

At any rate, David says that if he could be betrayed even by people whom he had trusted, there is little point in complaining about what his enemies have done to him, or want to do to him. Maybe they genuinely feel that his sin was too great.

11. The word *ve-attah* and You, seems superfluous here. Besides, is it possible to imagine that a devout person such as David asks Divine help i.e. *chaneni vahakimeni*, in order to be able to revenge himself on his enemies, i.e. *ve-ashalmah lahem*? The meaning of David is "I do not want that they should suffer, rather that You G'd by making me recover, i.e. *ve-hakimeni*, enable me to pay them for having saved my life. I will consider them as having saved my life, since it was saved to demonstrate that You have forgiven me.

12–13. I will know that You take delight in me if You do not let my enemies shout triumphantly over my death, not let them rejoice. David does not want his enemies to suffer troubles, since his own salvation is due to *betumi tamachti bi*, You supported me because of the purity of my motives. This is why You have made a covenant with me, (the Davidic dynasty) for all times. I could not endanger such a covenant by doing something unworthy.

14*Blessed is the LORD, God of Israel, from eternity to eternity.*
Amen and Amen.

42 *For the leader. A* maskil *of the Korahites.*
2*Like a hind crying for water, my soul cries for You, O God;*

14. To the question that David's kingship does not actually depend on himself and his personal worthiness, but also on the worthiness of the Jewish people, – whose sins might forfeit them their status as being always *lefonecha*, in Your Presence, David says *baruch hashem elokey yisrael*, Blessed be the Lord G'd of Israel, *me-ha-olam ve-ad ha-olam*, even from before the universe was created.

Bereshit Rabbah 1,4 explains that G'd had had in mind that Israel should praise Him even before the universe had been created. This is based on Psalms 74,2 "remember it is Your congregation which You have acquired *kedem*, from primordial time, i.e. before anything else existed".

We can understand this by the parable of a king who was told that his wife would bear him a son. Immediately on being told, the king goes out and buys all sorts of items the child may need in the future.

The future of the Jewish people is assured by David reasoning as follows. If things that did not exist (my dynasty) have come into existence, how much more reasonable is it to assume that things which did exist (Israel) will continue to exist!

Hence, *amen ve-amen*, there is certainty that G'd will remain Israel's G'd.

Psalm 42

1. Although we had stated at the beginning of our commentary on Psalms that we would refrain from lengthy introductions so as not to tire the reader unnecessarily, a short introduction is in order here. The sons of Korach are inspired and are addressing Jews in exile. They address themselves primarily to those Jews who are unaware of the great loss the nation has sustained when the temple had been destroyed and Jews had lost their independence in the land of Israel.

According to Sanhedrin 110, Korach's sons had withdrawn from the rebellion led by their father, hence we are told in Numbers 26,11 that "the sons of Korach did not die".

יד בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵהָעוֹלָם וְעַד-הָעוֹלָם אָמֵן
וְאָמֵן:

מב א לַמְנַצֵּחַ מַשְׂכִּיל לִבְנֵי-קֹרַח:
ב כְּאַיָּל תַּעֲרֹג עַל-אֲפִיקֵי-מָיִם כֵּן נַפְשִׁי תַעֲרֹג אֵלֶיךָ
אֱלֹהִים:

The outstanding feature of Jewish independence on Jewish soil, had been the temple, i.e. the accessibility of G'd to every Jew.

The 3 annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem had underscored that point. Sadly, though the Jewish souls were aware of and appreciated the importance of these pilgrimages, the insensitive Jewish body did not always do so, and considered such pilgrimages a burden. Had enough Jews made those pilgrimages,– the temple might never have been destroyed.

Those who failed to make the pilgrimages had also not realized what had become lost to them when the temple was destroyed and they had found themselves in exile.

Until G'd returns to the land of Israel as well as the Jewish people, most of us will not really appreciate what has been missing in our lives all this time.

The sons of Korach in this Psalm depict the collective Jewish souls as standing opposite the collective Jewish bodies, expressing their pain over the losses we have experienced and their longing for our spirits TOGETHER with our bodies to make that pilgrimage and to behold the Presence of G'd.

It is the nature of the spiritual souls to strive not only for their own *shalom* serenity and truth, but also for that of the bodies they inhabit. It wishes to bring them nearer to the Lord G'd of Israel.

The soul is not so much concerned with itself, since it is destined to return to the celestial regions anyways, and will there rejoice with being in G'd's Presence. However, the material, i.e. the body it inhabits does not have such automatic expectations, rather it returns to dust and will not see the glory of G'd until the resurrection of the dead. Therefore, the soul who is aware of the tremendous value of experiencing the Presence of G'd, asks anxiously when that time would arrive.

This is the gist of the simile described by the Psalmist in verse 2. A row of Jewish bodies is pictured as lining up before G'd, wanting to

[3]my soul thirsts for God, the living God; O when will I come to appear before God!
[4]My tears have been my food day and night; I am ever taunted with, "Where is your God?"
[5]When I think of this, I pour out my soul; how I walked with the crowd, moved with them, the festive throng, to the House of God with joyous shouts of praise.

know when they TOGETHER with their souls, when alive on this earth, will be privileged to see the Presence of G'd as of old, when the temple was standing. Our souls long for pity to be shown to our bodies!

They appeal to the Lord not to do so for the soul's sake, if He would not do it for the bodies's sake, but to do so because, after all, our souls are part of G'd Himself, as we have pointed out many times. Therefore, "have pity on Your people, just as You have pity on the soul", – and restore peace and harmony in the "palace", i.e. the celestial regions.

2. These words of the bodies are compared to the hart which pants after spring water. The grammatical construction of the masculine *ayal* with the verb in the feminine form, i.e. *ta-arog* instead of *ya-arog*, is very puzzling. Yalkut Shimoni on Psalms on this verse, describes the female roe when about to give birth as suffering and panting for G'd to help her from the pains. G'd dispatches a snake that bites her womb and brings on the immediate birth of her young ones.

Similarly, the sons of Korach called to G'd from their quandary, pleading not to become lost (destroyed), and G'd answered promptly.

The *ayal* (masculine) representing its species, is considered the most devout of the animal kingdom. Therefore, when the animals face a crisis, they appeal to the hart to plead with G'd for mercy. The hart, digs his hooves in the earth, thrusts with its horns and lowes. G'd responds, and water breaks forth from the earth in front of the hart. (compare Midrash Tehillim on this)

In our verse, Israel, the body, i.e. the physical part, who finds itself in this terrible exile, tells G'd that it does not know how to esteem the close ties existing between the soul and G'd, it feels more like the hart who when drinking, is thirsty just like all the other animals.

Nonetheless, the hart feels the thirst of the OTHER beasts, and does not commence digging, (i.e. pleading with G'd) until the other beasts have asked him to. Similarly, until my soul expressed its urgent longing for You, – to be seen in Your sanctuary, my soul has my

ג צָמְאָה נַפְשִׁי לֵאלֹהִים לְאֵל חָי מָתַי אָבוֹא וְאֵרָאֶה
פְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים:
ד הָיְתָה-לִּי דִמְעָתִי לֶחֶם יוֹמָם וָלָיְלָה בֵּאָמֹר אֵלַי כָּל-
הַיּוֹם אַיֵּה אֱלֹהֶיךָ:
ה אֵלֶּה אֶזְכְּרָה וְאֶשְׁפְּכָה עָלַי נַפְשִׁי כִּי אֶעֱבֹר בַּסָּךְ
אֶדַּדֵם עַד-בֵּית אֱלֹהִים בְּקוֹל-רִנָּה וְתוֹדָה הָמוֹן חוֹגֵג:

body's interests at heart, like the *ayal* has his fellow animals' interests at heart.

3. Not for its own sake does it thirst for G'd, but it wants to know when I, i.e. the material part of the Jewish people, the body, will be seen in the Presence of G'd during my lifetime.

A petitioner before a human king worries that his petition should be granted during his own lifetime and that of the king.

The petitioner before G'd worries only about his petition being granted during his own lifetime, seeing he is petitioning *el chay*, a G'd who lives forever.

Although the soul, after the body's death, would not be denied its chance to be seen in the Presence of G'd, i.e. "I will be seen before the face of G'd", its concern is for its body. (Pirkey de Rabbi Eliezer 34 that the soul will see the *Shechinah* upon its departure from the body.)

4. If you will ask me (the body) that since You in Your kindness have provided me with intelligence while I had a soul inhabit my body, how is it that I have not felt the absence of Your Presence in my life as part of my existence in exile? My answer is that *hayta li dim-ati*, my life was so full of tearful experiences, that I could only see what is in front of my eyes.

I, (the body) am not like the soul, which can see that which is not physically manifest. All I could feel was the desecration of the Lord's name all the time while I as the chosen people am helpless; especially when I am constantly provoked by the sneering question "where IS Your G'd?"

Only these sneering comments make me aware that I am missing something in my relationship with You.

To emphasize the depth of this, the Psalmist talks about weeping day and night, although, I hear these comments only *kol hayom*, by day.

I am so upset that my tears substitute for my food, i.e. *dim-ati lechem*, my tears have stilled my desire for bread.

6*Why so downcast, my soul, why disquieted within me?*
Have hope in God; I will yet praise Him for His saving presence.
7*O my God, my soul is downcast; therefore I think of You in this land of Jordan and Hermon, in Mount Mizar,*
8*where deep calls to deep in the roar of Your cataracts; all Your breakers and billows have swept over me.*
9*By day may the LORD vouchsafe His faithful care, so that at night a song to Him may be with me, a prayer to the God of my life.*
10*I say to God, my rock, "Why have You forgotten me, why must I walk in gloom, oppressed by my enemy?"*

5. I appeal therefore for all the souls to unite and to plead on my behalf i.e. *alay* before G'd. This is the meaning of *eleh ezkerah* etc.

This will induce me to remember how I used to go up with the multitude, i.e. *sach* to the house of G'd in the good old days when I used to go up on the pilgrimages to the temple in Jerusalem *addadem* i.e. in slow steps.

I would walk with them just like a mother who is teaching her infant to take the first steps on his own. The reason I did not find this tiresome at the time was that the multitude proceeded in a joyous and festive mood of gratitude to the Lord.

6. At this point, the body of Israel turns to the soul, asking "why are you so cast down, so disquieted concerning me", i.e. concerning my chances to be seen again in the Presence of G'd? Do not be embittered, since I have a solid pledge (Megillah 29) that I will still thank Him body and soul for my salvation, since G'd's *Shechinah* itself is in exile, unable at that stage to display the light of its countenance.

This is the reason that Daniel 9,17, requested "let Your countenance shine upon Your desolate sanctuary for the sake of *adonay*". (we have explained the term *adonay* as *Shechinah* frequently) Daniel refers to the absence of this *Shechinah* as being due to the absence of the temple. G'd's own re-emergence from this self imposed exile is tied to Israel's redemption.

hochili lelokim, hope in the Lord, for I shall yet thank Him, means that I am certain I will experience the salvation of His countenance, i.e. including my own salvation.

7. After this, the combined bodies of the Jewish people once

ו מַה תִּשְׁתּוֹחֲחִי נַפְשִׁי וַתֶּהֱמִי עָלָי הוֹחִילִי לֵאלֹהִים כִּי
עוֹד אוֹדֶנּוּ יְשׁוּעוֹת פָּנָיו:
ז אֱלֹהַי עָלַי נַפְשִׁי תִשְׁתּוֹחָח עַל-כֵּן אֶזְכָּרְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ
יַרְדֵּן וְחֶרְמוֹנִים מֵהַר מִצְעָר:
ח תְּהוֹם אֶל-תְּהוֹם קוֹרֵא לְקוֹל צִנּוֹרֶיךָ כָּל-מִשְׁבָּרֶיךָ
וְגַלֶּיךָ עָלַי עָבָרוּ:
ט יוֹמָם יְצַוֶּה יְהוָה חַסְדּוֹ וּבַלַּיְלָה שִׁירָה עִמִּי תְּפִלָּה
לְאֵל חַיָּי:
י אוֹמְרָה לְאֵל סַלְעִי לָמָּה שְׁכַחְתָּנִי לָמָּה קֹדֵר אֵלֵךְ
בְּלַחַץ אוֹיֵב:

more turn to G'd, saying "while my G'd is concerned about me", why would my soul have to be bowed down, i.e. isn't it enough that You G'd are concerned about my fate?!

Why would anybody else have to worry about me! If my exile is due to my lack of merit, I can remember what happened close to the Jordan river when the seduction by the Moabites and Midianites had occurred at Shittim, very close to the spot where we crossed the Jordan into the land of Israel. (Deut. 3,1–11) Also, I can remember the occurrence near Mount Hermon, or on the low mountain i.e. Sinai (when the tribe of Levi killed the idol worshippers who had danced around the golden calf)

None of the sins which occurred in or near those locations, i.e. our collective lack of merits, prevented You from helping us conquer the land of the "Hermonim", i.e. the lands of Sichon and Og. Therefore, please do not turn to our iniquities now either, and redeem us speedily.

8. If You say that we have to wait still further since the later the redemption comes the more certain it is that it will be the final redemption, Israel says "I do know that G'd will command His kindness, i.e. His redemption to happen by day – as a result of the *shirah*", the song I sing to my living G'd by night, i.e. while I am in exile.

The song referred to is G'd's Torah. (see Nachmanides end of Ha-azinu, who sees the *shirah*, as Torah, as guarantee of the eventual redemption). However, one needs to pray to G'd *chayay*, to lengthen my life, else I may not live to experience the redemption during my lifetime!

10. Before addressing ourselves to this verse, we need to

[11]Crushing my bones, my foes revile me, taunting me always with, "Where is your God?"
[12]Why so downcast, my soul, why disquieted within me? Have hope in God; I will yet praise Him, my ever-present help, my God.

43 *Vindicate me, O God, champion my cause against faithless people; rescue me from the treacherous, dishonest man.*
[2]For You are my God, my stronghold; why have You rejected me?
Why must I walk in gloom, oppressed by the enemy?

understand why in the parallel verses 6 and 12, the latter speaks of *yeshu-ot panay*, the salvation of my face, whereas the former speaks about *yeshu-ot panav*, the salvations of His face!

After the physical part of the nation had exclaimed about the exaggerated worry of their respective souls in verse 6, it turned and faced its soul and said to her: "I have yet another comforting thought to calm your fears concerning what will happen to me, an even greater comfort than the thought expressed previously".

The thought is that our tradition tells us that anyone praying for someone else's needs when he himself is in need of the same thing, will first see his own need satisfied. (Baba Kama 92)

Since the *Shechinah* is in exile and G'd's name is desecrated daily when people ask me "where IS Your G'd"?, and I am in exile also, I do not make my own situation my main concern and complain about my fate.

Rather, I complain about the exile of the *Shechinah*, saying about myself only "why would You forget me and let me walk mourning under my enemies' oppression"?

11. Concerning the exile of the *Shechinah* however, I feel as if my bones are being murdered when I have to listen daily to the taunt "where IS Your G'd?"

Even though I hear this question daily, it still bothers me as if my bones were being murdered!

12. This is why I can say with confidence to my collective soul, my spiritual parts, "do not be bowed down, and do not be fearful on my behalf!" "hope in G'd", i.e. I do not only hope and trust in His salvation, i.e. that of the *Shechinah*, but I am certain that once G'd realizes my

יא בְּרֶצַח בְּעַצְמוֹתַי חֵרְפוּנִי צוֹרְרָי בְּאָמְרָם אֵלַי כָּל-
הַיּוֹם אַיֵּה אֱלֹהֶיךָ:
יב מַה-תִּשְׁתּוֹחֲחִי נַפְשִׁי וּמַה-תֶּהֱמִי עָלָי הוֹחִילִי
לֵאלֹהִים כִּי-עוֹד אוֹדֶנּוּ יְשׁוּעֹת פָּנַי וֵאלֹהָי:

מג א שָׁפְטֵנִי אֱלֹהִים וְרִיבָה רִיבִי מִגּוֹי לֹא-חָסִיד מֵאִישׁ
מִרְמָה וְעַוְלָה תְּפַלְּטֵנִי:
ב כִּי אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי מָעוּזִּי לָמָּה זְנַחְתָּנִי לָמָּה-קֹדֵר אֶתְהַלֵּךְ
בְּלַחַץ אוֹיֵב:

true priorities, that I will be around to thank G'd for both my own salvation and that of MY G'd. (my own salvation first)

Psalm 43

1. The Psalmist is aware that if Israel had perfected its ways while in exile, the arguments used in verses 10–12 in the previous Psalm, would not be needed to help bring about its salvation. The redemption would come due to the accumulated merits of the Jewish people then.

Therefore, in this Psalm, the Psalmist suggests that positive action by G'd in fighting our enemies would be enough to trigger Israel into a comprehensive ***teshuvah***, thus entitling it to immediate and final redemption. We would not experience then a redemption for His name's sake only.

Since the nations lording it over us during exile are cruel beyond measure, G'd will judge them since they are NOT performing G'd's will, and our own deeds look better by comparison. Israel appeals even to the ***midat hadin***, attribute of justice, ***elokim***, being so certain that the gentile nations use excessive cruelty against us.

The ***goy lo chassid***, a nation lacking piety, refers to the Babylonians, who had pretended to carry out G'd's wishes when destroying the temple and leading us into exile.

We are told that a heavenly voice was heard daily telling Nebuchadnezzar to destroy the temple. (Pessicha Eycha Rabbah 30) Also. Jeremiah 25,9 calls Nebuchadnezzar a "servant of the Lord", a title usually reserved for people of the calibre of Moses and David. However, Nebuchadnezzar did not destroy the temple in order to

[3]Send forth Your light and Your truth; they will lead me; they will bring me to Your holy mountain, to Your dwelling-place,
[4]that I may come to the altar of God, God, my delight, my joy; that I may praise You with the lyre, O God, my God.

carry out G'd's commandment, – therefore we are entitled to G'd's intervention on our behalf.

Also, from the deceitful Haman we deserved to be rescued, since he tricked us into sinning first at the feast Ahasverus gave. (Esther Rabbah 7,13, Esther 3,12) He had used our sinful error as a pretext to decree our death.

2. Concerning the third exile, that under the Greeks, (Seleucids under Antiochus) why did You abandon me to his anti Torah decrees, since You are my fortress, source of my strength? Surely those decrees could not have been imposed with Your consent! Judge them! And finally, the long Edomite/Roman exile which has forced me to *et-halech* walk very slowly in my mourning.

3. Altogether, why was there a need for 4 exiles? Why did You not send Your light and Your truth, i.e. send us a leader of the calibre of Moses or David during or even before the first exile?

The sons of Korach may refer to Moses as the "light", seeing his parents' house had been filled with light the moment he had been born (Exodus 2,2 Rashi) and seeing that ever since his descent from Mount Sinai his skin had emitted light rays? (Exodus 34,29)

Moses is known throughout our literature as *ro-eh ne-eman*, a true shepherd. The same applies to David. "Truth" is an attribute associated with David as we know from Chronicles II 6,17 "the word You have said to Your servant David will become true".

The Psalmist refers then to both these shepherds of Israel, saying "send those kinds of shepherds to lead me, since they will immediately guide me on the true path and bring me to the mountain of Your holiness", i.e. even while it is still a "mountain", before a second temple will be erected on it.

Abraham had called the temple "mountain of G'd". (Genesis 22,14) The sons of Korach plead for the first temple to become the only temple ever needed, failing that for the second temple to fulfil the role. (We have explained in chapter 2 verse 6, that the first temple was built through the merit of Abraham, the second temple through the merit of Isaac, whereas the third temple will be built through the merit of Jacob. (compare also chapter 24 verse 1)

ג שְׁלַח-אוֹרְךָ וַאֲמִתֶּךָ הֵמָּה יַנְחוּנִי יְבִיאוּנִי אֶל-הַר-
קָדְשְׁךָ וְאֶל-מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֶיךָ:
ד וְאָבוֹאָה אֶל-מִזְבַּח אֱלֹהִים אֶל-אֵל שִׂמְחַת גִּילִי
וְאוֹדְךָ בְכִנּוֹר אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהָי:

If You do so, says the Psalmist, there will be no need for any exiles. The Talmud Taanit 29, teaches that due to Ishmael's being a descendant of Abraham, the first temple did not endure. This resulted in the slaying of 80000 Priests by Ishmaelites. The second temple did not endure due to Isaac having fathered Esau. This is why the second temple was ploughed over like a field (Isaac's description for the house of G'd, Genesis 24,63). Turnusrufus of Amalekite descent performed that deed.

The third temple however, which will be built through the merit of Jacob will endure. Jacob had referred to the temple as a "house", i.e. a spiritual "home", whose roots are in heaven. It will endure, because Jacob's sons were all loyal to their ancestral traditions. Also, seeing that it will be constructed by G'd Himself, this ensures survival.

This is why it is called ***beyt elokim***, G'd's house. (Genesis 28,19)

At the end of the period of the first temple, the concept of "temple" was still that employed by Abraham, i.e. ***har hakodesh***, the holy "Mountain".

mishkenotecha Your sanctuaries (plural) refers to the temple G'd will build on earth, as well as to the celestial sanctuary which will not be replaced by the terrestrial structure. The Zohar explains that whenever something descends from the celestial regions into our domain, this NEVER means that heaven has now been deprived of that. The Psalmist implores G'd to send us the true redemption in time before the second temple based only on Isaac's merit would be built.

Spiritual properties never decrease, they only increase. This applies especially to souls whose roots remain in the celestial regions, though they descend into the bodies of human beings.

4. The Psalmist, i.e. Israel the redeemed, will then come to G'd's altar, not to a man made altar, and G'd will account this for me as if I had come to the celestial sanctuary. We know this from chapter 24 alternate version, verse 1.

My accomplishment will be to physically be able to go there. ***el*** is the name by which Jacob was called by G'd also, – hence it represents here Jacob's temple, the one built through his merit.

5*Why so downcast, my soul, why disquieted within me?*
Have hope in God; I will yet praise Him, my ever-
present help, my God.

44 *For the leader. Of the Korahites. A* maskil.
2*We have heard, O God, our fathers have told us the*
deeds You performed in their time, in days of old.

(compare Genesis 33,20) This is the true joy of my joys, since Israel will then be wholly loyal, just like Jacob and his sons. Therefore, I will be able to thank You with the *kinor*, lyre, announcing to all that You are my G'd, that I can even call the attribute of justice "my G'd".

5. Since this is my future, why are you so bent down my soul, and why so fearful *alay* concerning the future of my body, since I will be privileged to see the countenance of G'd, since all these experiences await me!

I hope to G'd, for I shall yet thank Him both for the salvation of my countenance and for His being my G'd, i.e. His re-emergence from voluntary exile.

Psalm 44

2. This hymn is based on Jews in exile who implore their Creator to have mercy on them, and to save them from their distress.

In our commentary on the Torah on the 10 plagues in Egypt, we demonstrated that each plague corresponded to one of the 10 directives used by G'd to create the universe. (in a separate article called she-arim dealing with the 6 days of creation)

This is why when G'd announced at the beginning of the decalogue "I am your Lord who has taken you out of Egypt etc.", He did not need to add that He is also the G'd who had created the universe. It had been demonstrated to Israel (of that generation) that the same Power who had brought the plagues had accomplished BOTH feats.

All generations who have ever lived have heard G'd's proclamation "I Am your Lord who took you out of Egypt", even we who dwell in exile, since at the time of the revelation at Mount Sinai all souls, past present and future had been in attendance.

Still, creation of the universe by G'd had to be taken on faith by all those souls who though present at Sinai, had not been in Egypt, and had therefore not SEEN G'd at work during the plagues which were replicas of His works when He had created the universe.

ה מַה-תִּשְׁתּוֹחֲחִי נַפְשִׁי וּמַה-תֶּהֱמִי עָלָי הוֹחִילִי
לֵאלֹהִים כִּי-עוֹד אוֹדֶנּוּ יְשׁוּעוֹת פָּנַי וֵאלֹהָי:

מד א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לִבְנֵי-קֹרַח מַשְׂכִּיל:
ב אֱלֹהִים בְּאָזְנֵינוּ שָׁמַעְנוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ סִפְּרוּ-לָנוּ פֹּעַל-
פָּעַלְתָּ בִּימֵיהֶם בִּימֵי קֶדֶם:

Our forefathers who have witnessed the plagues have told us all about this, and this is why G'd had commanded (about the 10 plagues) in Exodus 10,2 "so that you will tell about this in the hearing of your son etc.".

Before we ask G'd to show us grace and lead us back to our homeland from this bitter exile, we are faced with the claim of the gentile nations (quoted in the first Rashi on Genesis 1,1) that we had come into possession of the land of Israel only by dispossessing all its previous owners, i.e. that we have stolen the land by force of arms. They accuse us of pursuing such illegal means again when we ask G'd to restore the land to us.

Rabbi Yitzchak, quoted by Rashi, comments that the whole reason the Torah does not begin its narrative with the laws which the Jewish people were given in Egypt, i.e. Exodus chapter 12, is to reassure us and teach the nations that the earth still belongs to G'd etc. (compare Rashi)

Still, even such an introduction is not sufficient, since the gentiles will argue "who says that G'd created earth for your sake"? Why should we not assume that He created the universe for the sake of others, after all we are all human beings descended from Adam and Eve!!?

This is why the Psalmist comes and says that he has 2 clear proofs that Israel had been chosen by G'd, especially.

Proof number 1) Who else has experienced a revelation by the living G'd such as we have? (Deut. 5,23) The nations at that time, hearing the thunder and lightning were scared that G'd was about to send another deluge and consulted the prophet Bileam. The latter told them that these were merely manifestations accompanying G'd's revelation to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. (Yalkut Shimoni, Yitro, item 286.)

The second proof that the earth had been created only for our

3With Your hand You planted them, displacing nations;
You brought misfortune on peoples, and drove them out.
4It was not by their sword that they took the land, their arm did not give them victory, but Your right hand, Your arm, and Your goodwill, for You favored them.
5You are my king, O God; decree victories for Jacob!
6Through You we gore our foes; by Your name we trample our adversaries;
7I do not trust in my bow; it is not my sword that gives me victory;
8You give us victroy over our foes; You thwart those who hate us.

sake, were the 10 plagues paralleling the acts of creation, and performed clear y for the sake of the Jewish people.

It follows that whosoever lived in the land of Canaan prior to the Jewish people. only acted as trustee till the true owners, i.e. Israel would come and claim it.

At any rate, the Psalmist refers to this by saying relative to what happened at Sinai,: 1) "Oh Lord we heard with our own ears"; and 2) relative to the 10 plagues" our forefathers have told us all about the work You have performed in times long preceding even their own lifetimes, i.e. *ma-asseh bereshit*, the work of creation.

3. This is why we know that the statement "I am the Lord your G'd who took you out of Egypt" in Exodus 20,2, refers to *chidush ha-olam*, a renewal of the creative process by G'd. G'd has proved that He is the true Creator, by the enactment of the miracles i.e. the plagues. The fact that You did so personally, i.e. *attah yadcha*, not through agents, was a re-enactment of the creation of the universe. All this proves that those on whose behalf You worked the miracles in Egypt, are also those for whose sake You had created the universe when You did, i.e. for the sake of Your servants.

This disposes of the argument of the gentiles that we have dispossessed them illegally. On the contrary, You have allocated land to the people when You saw fit. On the other hand, You have given them land to inherit when You planted them, and afterwards You have broken peoples, i.e. when Joshua defeated 31 kings, or You expelled them.

4. Besides, Israel did not conquer the land of Canaan due to their own swords and might, i.e. *zero-am*, so that they could be accused of robbery by invasion; rather, Your right hand and Your arm plus the

ג אַתָּה יָדְךָ גוֹיִם הוֹרַשְׁתָּ וַתִּטָּעֵם תָּרַע לְאֻמִּים
וַתְּשַׁלְּחֵם:
ד כִּי לֹא בְחַרְבָּם יָרְשׁוּ-אָרֶץ וּזְרוֹעָם לֹא-הוֹשִׁיעָה לָמוֹ
כִּי-יְמִינְךָ וּזְרוֹעֲךָ וְאוֹר פָּנֶיךָ כִּי רְצִיתָם:
ה אַתָּה-הוּא מַלְכִּי אֱלֹהִים צַוֵּה יְשׁוּעוֹת יַעֲקֹב:
ו בְּךָ צָרֵינוּ נְנַגֵּחַ בְּשִׁמְךָ נָבוּס קָמֵינוּ:
ז כִּי לֹא בְקַשְׁתִּי אֶבְטָח וְחַרְבִּי לֹא תוֹשִׁיעֵנִי:
ח כִּי הוֹשַׁעְתָּנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ וּמְשַׂנְאֵינוּ הֵבִישׁוֹתָ:

light of Your countenance, i.e. a display of Your liking for the Jewish people, accomplished all this. The reference is to Exodus 33,14 "My countenance will go with you, and I will give your rest", i.e. G'd Himself will do the conquering of the land of Canaan. The holy ark which preceded the armies of the Israelites was the symbol of G'd's Presence in their camp.

5. Assuming that the land of Israel became ours because of the promises to and merits of our patriarchs, – now in our exile, since the merit of our forefathers has been used up already – we have no one but You, i.e. *attah hoo malki.* (see Vayikra Rabbah 36,6 which discusses the precise moment the merit of the patriarchs became exhausted.)

The Psalmist refers to G'd as "my king G'd", as we refer to Him on New Year's day and until the Day of Atonement as "the holy king". (Berachot 12)

The reason our relationship with G'd has become so formalistic is our dearth of merit. This is why we are described by the Psalmist as "Jacob", instead of as "Israel", i.e. "command the salvation of Jacob"!

6. Our oppressor *tzareynu*, is Esau's spiritual representative, whereas *kameynu* are his troops on earth. We know that our *tzareynu* we can only gore with our "horns", i.e. the merits which are our outgrowths, extensions of ourselves. You G'd i.e. *be-cha* can employ our merits to inflict harm on Esau's spiritual representative in the celestial spheres. Afterwards, we down here on earth, need only to employ Your name, in order to inflict a defeat on Esau and what he represents on earth.

7. I am mentioning *be-cha* and *shimcha*, to demonstrate that I do NOT rely on *keshet*, the bow and *cherev* the sword as the weapons which will ensure my salvation.

8. Israel acknowledges that it is NOT like the Jacob of old, who

9 *In God we glory at all times, and praise Your name unceasingly.* Selah.
10 *Yet You have rejected and disgraced us; You do not go with our armies.*
11 *You make us retreat before our foe; our enemies plunder us at will.*
12 *You let them devour us like sheep; You disperse us among the nations.*
13 *You sell Your people for no fortune, You set no high price on them.*
14 *You make us the butt of our neighbors, the scorn and derision of those around us.*

was able to say to himself individually "I took it (the city of Shechem) from the Emorite with MY sword and MY bow". (Genesis 48,22) All we can do is to appeal to You G'd to bring salvation. After all we do not face the Emorite, but Esau, who enjoys the blessing of Isaac "you will live by your sword" (Genesis 27,40) How could I be expected to beat him at his own game?

9. How can I help aggrandize *shimcha*, Your name, i.e. make it complete? This I will do through public thanksgiving, i.e. *beshimcha leolam nodeh selah.* For thousands of years *be-elokim hillalnu* we have praised the Lord for the Exodus, a feat which at the time left most of the Egyptians alive, even with their armies intact. What You did was *hevishota*, You have put it to shame, and we praise You for this both by day and by night every day. (We recite the portion acknowledging the Exodus mornings and nights in our *keriyat shema*) How much more will we acknowledge gratefully the final redemption when Your own exiled *Shechinah* will re-emerge in its full glory, and Your four lettered name will be restored! The word *selah* implies something over and beyond what is implied in *kol hayom.* Perhaps the difference is that *kol hayom* means by day and by night, once, – whereas *selah* refers to an ongoing process, i.e. more than once daily and nightly.

10. The Psalmist now begins to list some of the troubles that have beset Israel in exile. You redoubled our problems by abandoning us, shaming us, not assisting our armies.

11. You caused us to retreat at the appearance of an enemy, kidding ourselves that our retreat which involved leaving our arms and equipment at the disposal of our enemies, in the expectation that

ט בֵּאלֹהִים הִלַּלְנוּ כָל-הַיּוֹם וְשִׁמְךָ לְעוֹלָם נוֹדֶה סֶלָה:
י אַף-זָנַחְתָּ וַתַּכְלִימֵנוּ וְלֹא-תֵצֵא בְּצִבְאוֹתֵינוּ:
יא תְּשִׁיבֵנוּ אָחוֹר מִנִּי-צָר וּמְשַׂנְאֵינוּ שָׁסוּ לָמוֹ:
יב תִּתְּנֵנוּ כְּצֹאן מַאֲכָל וּבַגּוֹיִם זֵרִיתָנוּ:
יג תִּמְכֹּר עַמְּךָ בְלֹא-הוֹן וְלֹא רַבִּיתָ בִּמְחִירֵיהֶם:
יד תְּשִׂימֵנוּ חֶרְפָּה לִשְׁכֵנֵינוּ לַעַג וָקֶלֶס לִסְבִיבוֹתֵינוּ:

this would satisfy them. Instead, we found that they went on to plunder ALL our possessions. They spared only our bodies.

12. What greatly distresses us is that You have given us up like sheep for food, even when we were already in exile in Babylonia, as we know from Psalms 79,2 (compare also Bereshit Rabbah 2,4) "they have given the corpse of Your servant as food for the birds in the sky, the flesh of Your devout ones to the beast of the earth". The expression *tzon ma-achol* used by the Psalmist, underscores the role reversal in our history. We used to be Your *tzon*, flock, i.e. *tzon marito* (Psalms 95,7). The Talmud Yevamot 61 puts it that G'd's flock is deserving of the title *adam* relative to other nations which are viewed like *behemot*, beasts. Now You have delivered us into the hands of these nations like sheep, fit only to be consumed by them as food.

After that, *uvagoyim zeritanu*, You dispersed us amongst the Medes, amongst the 127 provinces of the empire of Ahasverus.

13. At that time You sold Your people without compensation, to be killed (Esther 3,11) since Haman who had been prepared to pay the king for his loss in tax income from the Jews, had been told by the king to keep his money, since the king presumed that Haman's motive was purely patriotic.

To the argument that the king's gift to Haman was equivalent to compensation being paid for the destruction of the Jewish people, the Psalmist replies that even so, since the amount offered had been equivalent only to the 1/2 shekel every adult Jewish male had to pay as ransom for his soul after the sin of the golden calf – *lo ribito bimechireyhem*, this means that in the 1000 years which had intervened the Jewish people had not appreciated in value.

This is the same as saying that they had been sold *belo hon*, without compensating consideration. (compare Exodus 30,13 and Yalkut Shimoni Esther, item 1055)

14. Afterwards, during the Greek exile, You made us the laughing

15*You make us a byword among the nations, a laughingstock among the peoples.*
16*I am always aware of my disgrace; I am wholly covered with shame*
17*at the sound of taunting revilers, in the presence of the vengeful foe.*
18*All this has come upon us, yet we have not forgotten You, or been false to Your covenant.*
19*Our hearts have not gone astray, nor have our feet swerved from Your path,*
20*though You cast us, crushed, to where the sea monster is, and covered us over with deepest darkness.*

stock of our neighbours. Even though we were on our own soil, we were as in exile, not masters in our own house.

The Seleucids desecrated our sanctuary, (Shabbat 21) and defiled our daughters. When we had been maltreated by the Babylonians, the latter at least had never known how greatly respected we had been while in our homeland. Being derided by the Babylonians could be understood then. But to be scorned and derided in our own country was immeasurably more humiliating. After all, our neighbours had first witnessed our renaissance, i.e. our return to the land of Israel and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

15. Lastly, during the Roman exile, You have made us the prime example of derision amongst the nations.

16. Since that time, my shame is confronting me on a daily basis, my face is covered in shame from head to toe. Still, I am excited only when actually confronting these expressions of disdain, i.e. *negdi.*

17. However, even when I only HEAR blaspheming and taunts directed at G'd, such as "where IS your G'd?", this is something that excites me even more than beholding the face of my oppressor with my eyes while he revenges himself on me by imposing severe afflictions on me.

The letter *mem* in *mipney* means "more than facing", just as it is used in *hatov attah mibalak ben tzippor* (Judges 11,25) i.e. "are you better than Balak" etc. There are many examples of such constructions. Israel says that hearing G'd being mocked is more upsetting than being mistreated by its captors to its face.

18. In the last 2 verses the Psalmist had described Israel as speaking in the singular. The reason may be that he did not speak in the name of the whole nation, but only in the name of those Jews

טו תְּשִׂימֵנוּ מָשָׁל בַּגּוֹיִם מְנוֹד רֹאשׁ בַּלְאֻמִּים:
טז כָּל-הַיּוֹם כְּלִמָּתִי נֶגְדִּי וּבֹשֶׁת פָּנַי כִּסָּתְנִי:
יז מִקּוֹל מְחָרֵף וּמְגַדֵּף מִפְּנֵי אוֹיֵב וּמִתְנַקֵּם:
יח כָּל-זֹאת בָּאַתְנוּ וְלֹא-שְׁכַחֲנוּךָ וְלֹא-שִׁקַּרְנוּ בִּבְרִיתֶךָ:
יט לֹא נָסוֹג אָחוֹר לִבֵּנוּ וַתֵּט אֲשֻׁרֵינוּ מִנִּי אָרְחֶךָ:
כ כִּי דִכִּיתָנוּ בִּמְקוֹם תַּנִּים וַתְּכַס עָלֵינוּ בְּצַלְמָוֶת:

who remained totally faithful to G'd even in exile, i.e. a select few. It is those individuals who grieve MORE about G'd's honour than about their personal dignity.

Now, the Psalmist turns his attention to arguments that can be used by the majority of the Jewish people, hence the switch to the use of the plural. The people say that "though we have not reached the level of piety of those spoken of in verse 16 and 17, at least even we have not forgotten You, even though we were in exile for 70 years in Babylonia". (Jeremiah 25,11) Nor did we break Your covenant while in exile under the Medes when the decree to kill us all was published.

On the contrary, after the death of Haman many gentiles adopted the Jewish faith, (Esther 8,17). No Jew had converted in order to escape the threat of death, i.e. *lo shikarnu.*

19. Concerning the exile under the Greeks, of which Bereshit Rabbah 2,4 says that we were forced to inscribe idolatrous slogans even on the horns of our oxen, we explained that this is meant as a simile for the sin of the golden calf. The Greeks forced us into idol worship, recalling we had done so once before. The Psalmist has Israel say "we did not go backwards in our heart", i.e. our HEARTS did not engage in idolatrous thoughts, neither *vatet ashurenu mini orchecha*, did our step deviate from Your path. Rather we were prepared to be martyrs.

20 Now to the exile commenced when Titus burned the temple. You allowed us to be trodden down in a place *tanim*, i.e. where monsters, powerful forces of Satan rule. Although we found ourselves in situations where the shadow of death constantly hovered over us, they offered us an out if we would accept this *tzalmavet*, i.e. serve idols, i.e. something akin to the shadow of death. You G'd subjected us to the temptation of serving idols. The Torah had warned (Deut. 4,28) "you will serve there gods made by human hands of wood and stone".

21*If we forgot the name of our God and spread forth our hands to a foreign god,*
22*God would surely search it out, for He knows the secrets of the heart.*
23*It is for Your sake that we are slain all day long, that we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.*
24*Rouse Yourself; why do You sleep, O Lord? Awaken, do not reject us forever!*
25*Why do You hide Your face, ignoring our affliction and distress?*
26*We lie prostrate in the dust; our body clings to the ground.*

21. Even if some, or even numerous Jews "served" such idols, this was only service from the lips outwards, i.e. we spread our hands, – not our hearts – towards alien deities.

22. Should someone argue that we should rather have forfeited our lives instead of engaging in "sham conversions", quoting "for we have been killed for Your sake", in verse 23, I quote Rabbi Chanina son of Abba on shir hashirim rabbah 2,7. Rabbi Chaninah said: "if someone were to demand my life in order to sanctify the name of the Lord, I would comply, provided that I would be killed quickly and immediately. However, in the generation of those persecutions I could not have stood it". At that time, the most cruel tortures were applied to Jews who refused to serve idols. Such tortures were too much to bear, even for most of those Jews WILLING to die for the sake of the Lord's name. G'd knows that the Jewish hearts remained loyal to Him, even if not always their bodies.

23. Had we been slaughtered like sheep, i.e. a quick death, we would all have been willing to die for You.

24. The Psalmist, i.e. Israel, appeals to G'd to awaken, since the length of our exile suggests that He has gone into a slumber due to our sins, or, even worse, into a fast sleep, a state during which He does not supervise our fate. Thirdly, still worse, He may have turned His attention away from us altogether until after we return to Him in penitence.

If G'd is only slumbering, ***urah***, awake! If He is ***yashen***, fast asleep. ***heykitzah***, do not continue but wake up! Otherwise, there is danger that Israel, despairing of G'd's mercy will become guilty of more serious sins. Do not delay redemption forever, ***lanetzach***, i.e. until the

כא אִם־שָׁכַחְנוּ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ וַנִּפְרֹשׂ כַּפֵּינוּ לְאֵל זָר׃
כב הֲלֹא אֱלֹהִים יַחֲקָר־זֹאת כִּי הוּא יֹדֵעַ תַּעֲלֻמוֹת לֵב׃
כג כִּי־עָלֶיךָ הוֹרַגְנוּ כָל־הַיּוֹם נֶחְשַׁבְנוּ כְּצֹאן טִבְחָה׃
כד עוּרָה לָמָּה תִישַׁן אֲדֹנָי הָקִיצָה אַל־תִּזְנַח לָנֶצַח׃
כה לָמָּה פָנֶיךָ תַסְתִּיר תִּשְׁכַּח עָנְיֵנוּ וְלַחֲצֵנוּ׃
כו כִּי שָׁחָה לֶעָפָר נַפְשֵׁנוּ דָּבְקָה לָאָרֶץ בִּטְנֵנוּ׃

originally appointed date, (as discussed in Sanhedrin 98) i.e. *be-ittah*, the date not being advanced. (compare Isaiah 60,22)

25. If our situation is one in which You have deliberately turned Your face away from us, i.e. that we have become subject to horoscopic forces only, this is intolerable. Why would you forget our suffering? If Your withdrawal from us would mean only the withdrawal of Your goodness etc., we could have borne this silently, since it might not lead us into becoming heretics, and we would eventually do *teshuvah*.

However, we are suffering from unheard of deprivations, which lead to increasing sinfulness. Our sages (Ketuvot 33–Tossaphot *ilmale*) said that if Chananyah Mishael and Azaryah had been tortured before they had been thrown into the fiery furnace, they would have bowed down to the image. How then can we resist becoming tainted by sin?

26. The reason G'd fused body and soul in man was to enable the soul to spiritualize the body, so that it could attain the sanctity of the soul through studying Torah and observing the *mitzvot*. This process does not apply to the wicked; they drag the soul down to the level of their bodies.

Israel pleads with G'd and says: "look here, our immersion amongst the gentiles was adequate reason for us to learn from their ways, especially considering the pressures we have been exposed to". This would have dragged down our souls instead of elevating our bodies, i.e. *shacha le-afar nafsheynu*, it would have dragged our soul down to the dust.

Dust is equivalent to the physical, transient part of man. All creatures serve as food for man the species, just as plants and vegetation serve as food for the animal kingdom which does not possess the power of speech. (the division amongst different living creatures is based on the ability to communicate thoughts)

27 *Arise and help us, redeem us, as befits Your faithfulness.*

45 *For the leader; on* shoshannim. *Of the Korahites. A* maskil. *A love song.*
2 *My heart is astir with gracious words; I speak my poem to a king; my tongue is the pen of an expert scribe.*

Now, our belly, which the food supposedly belongs to, – cleaves to the ground where the beasts find their food supply.

Our stature as humans has been lost until we have become totally earthbound. We are worse off than the beasts which cannot speak. This is the meaning of our sages in Sanhedrin 59, "if man is not worthy, they tell him that even a fly is superior to him". (i.e. preceded him in the order of creation)

The Psalmist echoes that thought when he says *davkah le-aretz bitnenynu.*

27. Therefore it is essential that You arise immediately and redeem us and put an end to our troubles.

Not that You grant us some relief such as is typical of historic cycles, but that You grant us total ascendancy over Amalek and the other gentile nations so that our fate will undergo a thorough reversal. By the speediness and the extent of that reversal of our fate, the world will come to know that only the hand of G'd could have accomplished this.

Psalm 45, first commentary

1. Our sages in various statements scattered throughout Midrash Rabbah (Bereshit Rabbah 49,9; 59,5 etc.) have explained this entire Psalm as describing our patriarch Abraham. Various other commentators are of divergent opinions. I will follow a path which seems to me closest to the obvious meaning of the text. It is my feeling that the principal message of this Psalm is to demonstrate G'd's love for the righteous amongst His people.

Or, it may even be to demonstrate G'd's love for the entire Jewish people when they are all *tzaddikim*, righteous. This nation is not only superior to all other nations but even to the *malachey hasharet*, G'd's ministering angels.

In this context, the intelligent reader will also observe that there

כו קוּמָה עֶזְרָתָה לָּנוּ וּפְדֵנוּ לְמַעַן חַסְדֶּךָ׃

מה א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-שֹׁשַׁנִּים לִבְנֵי-קֹרַח מַשְׂכִּיל שִׁיר יְדִידֹת׃
ב רָחַשׁ לִבִּי דָּבָר טוֹב אֹמֵר אֲנִי מַעֲשַׂי לְמֶלֶךְ לְשׁוֹנִי
עֵט סוֹפֵר מָהִיר׃

exists a deep affection of the soul for the body, and that each benefits from the presence of its partner.

The hymn is based on *shoshanim*, i.e. the righteous, as our sages interpret the verse in Song of Songs (6,2) "My beloved descended into the garden". *dodi* is a reference to G'd, whereas the *gan* garden is a reference to the universe (Midrash Rabbah Shir Hashirim 6,1.)

G'd descended into the physical world to tend in the *ganim*, i.e. the synagogues and houses of study, *velilkot shoshanim* and to gather the righteous and to enjoy their fragrance.

In our Psalm, the *tzaddikim* represented by the word *shoshanim*, are the sons of Korach whom G'd chose and saved from amongst the thorns and thistles (where roses, i.e. the assembly of Korach and his rebels are usually found.)

This is the reason for the verse (Numbers 27,11) "that the sons of Korach did not die".

Even though, essentially, the hymn deals with the sons of Korach as such, there is a *maskil*, an instruction, i.e. a hymn to two loves, i.e. the love between G'd and Israel, and the love which exists between the body and the soul which is in turn a product of the love relationship between G'd and Israel.

2. The Psalmist commences as if an Israelite boasts of the great love G'd entertains for him even in his capacity as a mere individual. He says that he recognizes the two outstanding favours G'd has done for him, i.e. for the individual members of the people of Israel.

This is something G'd has NOT done for members of any other nation. The first favour is that G'd considers the good intentions harboured by a Jew as being equivalent to performance of the act which was the subject of the good intention. In practice this means that if said Jew was accidentally prevented from consummating his good intention, G'd gives him credit for having consummated it.

However, the good intention is not RECORDED by G'd until it has been verbalized, says the Psalmist. This is the meaning of *leshoni eyt mahir*, my tongue is the pen which records quickly.

[3]*You are fairer than all men; your speech is endowed with grace; rightly has God given you an eternal blessing.*
[4]*Gird your sword upon your thigh, O hero, in your splendor and glory;*
[5]*in your glory, win success; ride on in the cause of truth and meekness and right; and let your right hand lead you to awesome deeds.*

This is similar to Reuben saying to his brethren "let us not kill someone" (Genesis 37,21). The Torah credits Reuben with *vayatzileyhu miyadam*, he saved him from their hand, already PRIOR to his intention having been expressed verbally. The Torah RECORDS it however, only after the good intention has been stated. This makes his *lashon*, tongue as if it were the pen that writes, i.e. *eyt*. (compare Ruth Rabbah 5,6 re the impact of G'd recording man's good intentions)

3. The holy spirit replies saying "You have BOASTED that you are more beloved of G'd than the other nations in that *mitzvot* which you expressed willingness to perform are already recorded as deeds. This can be balanced however, against the fact that sometimes G'd does not respond (listen) to your prayer, especially when your request involves interference with other people's free will.

Therefore, I give you My assurance that inasmuch as you put your trust in Him, you will certainly be saved – as long as *yofyafit* you are more beautiful than other people, i.e. as long as you wear the image of G'd on your face, that your righteous demeanour is visible on the contours of your face. When that is the case, *hutzak cheyn besiftotecha*, grace is poured upon your lips, i.e. your prayer will be answered.

This is how we have explained Song of Songs 2,14 "oh my dove which are in the cleft of the rock, *yafati*" etc.. G'd says to Israel "when you see yourself pursued by the gentiles taking refuge in the rocks, – do not cry unto me until you have done *teshuvah* and have restored the *tzelem elokim*, image of G'd to your face. Only then, *hareyni et marayich* can you show me your face.

Here the Psalmist expresses the identical thought *yafyafit mibney adam*, when your beauty as a human being is clearly visible, i.e. your spiritual beauty, *hutzak cheyn misiftotcha*, then grace will be poured out when your lips move, i.e. when you pray.

This is why G'd gave you, i.e. the human species, an enduring blessing when He said (Genesis 9,2) "the fear of you will be on all the

ג יָפְיָפִיתָ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם הוּצַק חֵן בְּשִׂפְתוֹתֶיךָ עַל-כֵּן
בֵּרַכְךָ אֱלֹהִים לְעוֹלָם:
ד חֲגוֹר חַרְבְּךָ עַל-יָרֵךְ גִּבּוֹר הוֹדְךָ וְהַדָּרֶךָ:
ה וְהַדְרְךָ צְלַח רְכַב עַל-דְּבַר-אֱמֶת וְעַנְוָה צֶדֶק וְתוֹרְךָ
נוֹרָאוֹת יְמִינֶךָ:

beasts of the field etc.". This means that when the animals observe that your face reflects G'd's image – they will fear you and not molest you.

4. There is therefore no need to assure you that you will be saved, but as you gird yourself with your sword, your majesty and glory, you will automatically become a hero – though that is not your nature i.e. *al yarech gibor* as distinct from *al yarkecha gibor*, which would be a reference to the place one girds one's sword.

Your glory will consist of the fact that the mere girding of the sword will be considered as if you had already conquered with it, i.e. the very opposite of Kings I 20,11, when Achav tells Ben Haddad *al yithallel choger bemafteach*, that the one who girds his sword should not brag as if he had already been victorious, that arming oneself is NOT equivalent to winning the battle. However, you will need the sword to fight with, and while you will be victorious over the few, victory against superior numbers is not assured automatically.

(the term *tifartecha*, would have included much more than is promised in this verse)

5. But do the following so that your glory will be considered an essential part of you. *tzelach rechav al devar emet*, proceed over and beyond the demands of Torah law. *emet* is what you are obligated to do. But if you act *lifnim mishurat hadin*, as our sages explain on the verse in Samuel II 19,18, "proceed", i.e. go beyond, then your glory has become an integral part of you.

Similarly, *rechav* suggests a posture of leadership, assuming all this is based on Torah values i.e. *devar emet*. Also the *tzedek* charity which is performed is performed with *anavah*, modesty, without fanfare so that the recipient is not embarrassed. When all this is the case, then the *yetzer hatov* the "good" urge will enable you to advance to UNLIMITED spiritual heights, i.e. your right hand (the good urge) will teach you to accomplish awesome things. We know from Eccles. 10,2 that the "good" urge is called *yemincha* your right side, since Solomon states that "the heart of the wise is on his right side".

6Your arrows, sharpened, [pierce] the breast of the king's enemies; peoples fall at your feet.
7Your divine throne is everlasting; your royal scepter is a scepter of equity.
8You love righteousness and hate wickedness; rightly has God, your God, chosen to anoint you with oil of gladness over all your peers.
9All your robes [are fragrant] with myrrh and aloes and cassia; from ivoried palaces lutes entertain you.

The message is that such motivation leads to progressively greater spiritual achievements.

6. If you not only perform charity in the proper manner, but also sharpen your arrows, i.e. apply justice in the fairest possible manner, not allowing flattery etc. to sway your judgement, then you will not only achieve the blessing described in verse 4, i.e. victory over individuals, but *amim tachtecha yiplu*, whole nations will succumb to you, even before the battle is joined. This is the meaning of *be-lev oyvey hamelech*, while they had only been enemies in the heart of the king, had not joined battle yet.

7. The holy spirit now turns to G'd to explain how all this is possible, i.e. that the nations will fall before Israel merely by Israel "sharpening its arrows". The *tzaddik* whose rod, *shevet* is fair, is on the same wavelength as *shevet malchutcha*, the rod of Your kingdom. Hence You will act on the *tzaddik*'s behalf. You will punish the nations. Another meaning could be that Israel does not claim credit for these successes, but attributes them all to the throne and justice of G'd.

8. The holy spirit continues as if speaking to the *tzaddik*, saying "did I not tell you how superior your position is in the eyes of G'd due to your charitable dispositions and your disdain for evil".

The verse deals with the penitent sinner. Were it not so, the Psalmist should have stated "you hated evil and loved righteousness" in that order, parallel to *sur me-ra ve-asseh tov* (Psalms 34,15). However, the Psalmist wanted to reassure the repentant sinner that he is not viewed as inferior to the *tzaddik* who had never tasted sin, but that he is even superior to such a *tzaddik* as we learn in Berachot 34 "the ethical plateau occupied by repentant sinners is not matched even by the wholly righteous".

As Maimonides says on Chagigah 15, – that if someone had tasted sin and STILL succeeded in subduing his *yetzer hara* "evil" urge, his reward is greater than someone who had never tasted the

ו חִצֶּיךָ שְׁנוּנִים עַמִּים תַּחְתֶּיךָ יִפְּלוּ בְּלֵב אוֹיְבֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:
ז כִּסְאֲךָ אֱלֹהִים עוֹלָם וָעֶד שֵׁבֶט מִישֹׁר שֵׁבֶט מַלְכוּתֶךָ:
ח אָהַבְתָּ צֶדֶק וַתִּשְׂנָא רֶשַׁע עַל-כֵּן מְשָׁחֲךָ אֱלֹהִים
אֱלֹהֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן שָׂשׂוֹן מֵחֲבֵרֶיךָ:
ט מֹר וַאֲהָלוֹת קְצִיעוֹת כָּל-בִּגְדֹתֶיךָ מִן-הֵיכְלֵי שֵׁן מִנִּי
שִׂמְּחוּךָ:

sweetness of sin. The implication here is that such sinner had previously like sin. The Psalmist then describes a person who after having sinned, developed love for charity and righteousness and subsequently came to hate all manner of sin.

The anointing with oil, and the added joy such a person enjoys over his *chaverecha*, "your friends", is his enhanced standing over the *tzaddik* i.e. *chaver* who had not hated sin since he had never really appreciated the dangerous attraction that sin represents.

9. Not only have you been anointed with *shemen sasson* oil of gladness, but even with *mor veahalot*, resin from fragrant trees and various spices permeate all your garments. *begadim* are the garments, i.e. the good deeds that attach themselves to the soul of those who have performed the *mitzvot*. The spirit garbs itself in these *begadim*, a simile for the *reyach gan eden* the fragrance of the garden of Eden. When we read in Genesis 27,27, that "Isaac smelled the fragrance of his garments" (Jacob's, or Adam's respectively) the meaning is that he noticed the fragrance of paradise entering the room when Jacob entered.

The word *ketziot* does not have the conjunctive letter *vav* in front, to signify that it is an adjective applying to both *mor* and *ahalot*.

Mor is a term for blood which has congealed. Inasmuch as *hadam hoo hanefesh*, that blood is the essence of a person, the "soul", it can be viewed like the garment surrounding the soul, protecting it.

Normally, the smell of dried blood evaporates after a while if the dried blood remains uncovered. Similarly, *ahalot* are the kind of spices whose fragrance evaporates. They both have something in common with cinnamon, i.e. *ketziot*, in that their fragrance does not evaporate. Our sages say that Job's daughter was called Ketziah since her fragrance never ceased. (Job 42,14, compare Baba Batra 16)

The kind of fragrance that can be described as functioning like a garment is *heycheley sheyn*, the inner sanctuary which is not exposed to view just like teeth are concealed within the closed

[10]Royal princesses are your favorites; the consort stands at your right hand, decked in gold of Ophir.
[11]Take heed, lass, and note, incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house,
[12]and let the king be aroused by your beauty; since he is your lord, bow to him.
[13]O Tyrian lass, the wealthiest people will court your favor with gifts,
[14]goods of all sorts.
The royal princess, her dress embroidered with golden mountings, [15]is led inside to the king; maidens in her train, her companions, are presented to you.

mouth. *mini* means from there. Acquiring these fragrant garments as a result of performing G'd's wishes is something the angels are NOT able to do.

10. We have explained at the outset that this hymn includes two *yedidot* beloved ones. So far the Psalmist has concentrated on the specific love between G'd and His people of Israel, and has mentioned as an aside, Israel's advantages over the ministering angels. One aspect of this was the fact that Israel qualifies for divine reward when it lives in accordance with G'd's wishes, so that G'd sets aside *shemen sasson* etc. for that purpose.

Now we come to the principal advantage Israel enjoys over the ministering angels. The souls of the Jewish people are "princesses", i.e. daughters of the Divine great name and the *Shechinah*. The last two are known as *melachim* kings (plural) though they represent a single *achdut*, unity. These are concepts that students of the Kabbalah are familiar with.

The holy spirit speaking as if conversing with G'd, is saying "here the daughters of the kings" i.e. the holy souls are included in those whom You consider especially precious to You, *bikrotecha*.

Amongst those there stands the queen, *shegal*, i.e. the soul of the righteous. When You despatch her into this world, she stands on Your right bedecked in the fine gold of Ophir.

(Just as Ophir is the source of the finest gold in the terrestrial world, so the Jewish soul is adorned with the spiritual equivalent of the finest gold when it descends into this world.)

11. You say to her (the Jewish soul prior to entering the body she is to inhabit) that your ultimate record will be this stature of yours as "My queen". Therefore, forget "your people", i.e. your fellow souls in

י בְּנוֹת מְלָכִים בִּיקָרוֹתֶיךָ נִצְּבָה שֵׁגָל לִימִינְךָ בְּכֶתֶם
אוֹפִיר:
יא שִׁמְעִי-בַת וּרְאִי וְהַטִּי אָזְנֵךְ וְשִׁכְחִי עַמֵּךְ וּבֵית
אָבִיךְ:
יב וְיִתְאַו הַמֶּלֶךְ יָפְיֵךְ כִּי הוּא אֲדֹנַיִךְ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִי-לוֹ:
יג וּבַת-צֹר בְּמִנְחָה פָּנַיִךְ יְחַלּוּ עֲשִׁירֵי עָם:
יד כָּל-כְּבוּדָּה בַת-מֶלֶךְ פְּנִימָה מִמִּשְׁבְּצוֹת זָהָב לְבוּשָׁהּ:
טו לִרְקָמוֹת תּוּבַל לַמֶּלֶךְ בְּתוּלוֹת אַחֲרֶיהָ רֵעוֹתֶיהָ
מוּבָאוֹת לָךְ:

the celestial spheres which have not yet been assigned to any specific bodies for them to inhabit.

12. The king, i.e. G'd, desires your own beauty, i.e. the beauty due to your accomplishments while on this murky planet, and NOT the glory you used to exist in and benefit from by the mere fact that you were created in the celestial spheres. "I do not want you to feel that being confined to earth is NOT for your benefit".

G'd does not NEED you, rather by fulfilling His command, you enhance YOUR stature. (compare Job 35,7.)

13. Do not be envious of anything in the terrestrial world if you find yourself in the body even of the most successful of earthly creatures. Even if you had been the daughter of *tzor = sar*, a terrestrial prince, – whose designation is *tzor*, whose people are most accomplished and successful, as we read in Ezekiel 27,2 etc.

Your happiness would be limited to the gifts presented to you by the wealthy of the people, i.e. *panayich yechalu ashirey am*. How could that compare to the happiness in store for you in the sanctuary of the Lord in the celestial spheres?? On earth, success needs to be displayed publicly, – or it is not deemed success.

14. Not so the honour and glory of a daughter of the king of kings. Her honour is within. She is adorned by gold=Torah, and by the commandments she performs regularly, i.e. *mishbetzot zahav*, wrought gold. Even the most common of Jews is full of the merits by dint of the many *mitzvot* performed by him automatically. (Eyruvin 19) (Shir Hashirim Rabbah 4,3)

15. If, moreover, Israel (the king's daughter) performs the commandments *lirkamot*, like needlework, embroidery, i.e. concerning herself with all the finer points of such performances, then

[16]They are led in with joy and gladness; they enter the palace of the king.
[17]Your sons will succeed your ancestors; you will appoint them princes throughout the land.
[18]I commemorate your fame for all generations, so peoples will praise you forever and ever.

her glory is not only ***penimah*** within, but she will be displayed as a shining example before the "King", i.e. G'd.

The virgins, i.e. other sin free souls who have learned from her will follow in her footsteps. All those souls that have not been tainted by the ***yetzer hara***, "evil" urge, will be brought to You.

16. They will ascend to the sanctuary of the "King" by dint of your merit. On the way to You, – they will be accompanied by joyful songs by angels. Once they come to Your sanctuary they will remain there due to their own power, merit. There is a tremendous difference between a soul who ascends by its own power, and the soul which needs to be propelled – in order to ascend. This is what the prophet Elijah explained to the student who had wished to witness the souls of the righteous ascend heavenwards. (Baba Metzia 85, check text). Elijah told the student that he could watch all of them but not the soul of Rabbi Chiyah. When the student wanted to know how he could be sure which souls he was seeing, Elijah told him that all the other souls were being raised, or preceded by angels except the soul of Rabbi Chiyah who did not require assistance.

Similarly, the Psalmist discusses the souls that are being conveyed heavenwards by angels, ***bismachot ve-gil***.

17. On Proverbs 8,15 "By Me kings reign, and princes decree justice", we have explained that though the wisest of men seem frequently to lack enough bread for themselves in this world, and their so called "reign" is therefore hard to detect, this is because the kind of "reign" which is meant is the ability to command the sun to stop orbiting, (Joshua 10,12) or the ability to turn vinegar into fuel. (Taanit 25). Such miracles can be commanded by ***tzaddikim***, regardless of their personal wealth in this life.

This is a far greater power than that at the disposal of the materially wealthy. Concerning such ***tzaddikim***, Proverbs 8,16 says that "princes rule over Me", i.e. I allow them to "command" Me to act in a certain manner.

טז תּוּבַלְנָה בְּשִׂמְחֹת וָגִיל תִּבֹאֶינָה בְּהֵיכַל מֶלֶךְ׃
יז תַּחַת אֲבֹתֶיךָ יִהְיוּ בָנֶיךָ תְּשִׁיתֵמוֹ לְשָׂרִים בְּכָל-
הָאָרֶץ׃
יח אַזְכִּירָה שִׁמְךָ בְּכָל-דֹּר וָדֹר עַל כֵּן עַמִּים יְהוֹדוּךָ
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד׃

Furthermore, in line with Solomon's statement in Proverbs 17,6 that "the crown of the old men are well turned out grandchildren", the Psalmist avers that just as a crown is what is above one's head, so on occasion grandchildren surpass their grandparents in achievements. Our sages in Sanhedrin 19 apply this statement to the respective achievements of Jacob (the grandson) and those of Abraham.

Here the Psalmist says that though your sons will not excel your fathers, but *tachat avotecha*, nonetheless you will set them in a position where they will perform miracles all over the earth; they will belong to the category of people whose decrees act as a command to "Me" (G'd) (compare Proverbs 8,16) This is what is meant by *teshiteymo lesarim bechol ha-aretz.*

18. The response by the devout Jew who has heard this assurance by the Psalmist is that he will make mention of G'd's name in each generation, which in turn will lead to the nations acknowledging G'd for ever more. It is an undertaking that such powers as were possessed by Rabbi Chaninah ben Dotha (Taanit 25) will not be employed without giving credit to G'd by the petitioner. They will not be used to demonstrate the petitioner's OWN (supposed) power.

Psalm 45, second interpretation

1. The Talmud in Sotah 2 makes what appears like a contradictory statement. On the one hand we are told that "40 days before the formation of the embryo, a heavenly voice proclaims that so and so's daughter is a suitable match for the son of so and so". This sounds as if marriages are made in heaven, i.e. are predestined, not subject to free choice.

On the other hand, we are told "no one is paired with a marriage partner except on the basis of his deeds", i.e. compatibility of lifestyle and outlook. At any rate, according to the second statement, free will or rather the manner in which it has been exercised, plays a role in who marries whom.

The Talmud answers the apparent contradiction by saying that the first situation speaks of the first *zivug*, – loosely translated marriage, – whereas the second situation described speaks about the second marriage. The Zohar explains that every single groom and bride experience both the first and the second *zivug*.

Before birth, when neither the prospective groom or bride have sinned yet, the proclamation "so and so is suitable for so and so", is based on the potential that either party could and should attain in life on earth. The heavenly voice proclaims who is suitable for whom on that basis.

However, once a person has been born, he is likely to deviate from the path to realizing his full potential, due to his committing sins, which act as impediments on his march towards reaching his maximum objective.

Since G'd is all knowing, He knows who is a suitable marriage partner for whom under the newly created conditions.

Let us assume that the groom originally intended for a certain girl had become guilty of sins, whereas his intended bride had not sinned at all. G'd arranges for her to find a groom of a better calibre than the one He had assigned originally for her. The same principle is at work when the girl in question (of the *zivug rishon*) had sinned, whereas the *chatan*, groom had not.

Concerning BOTH matches, the Talmud quotes Psalms 68,7, (see Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim item 795) that "G'd sets the single ones in a home", (i.e. provides a family), in other words G'd arranges that two mutually suitable people should meet and get married.

The *motzi assirim bekosharot* part of the verse, i.e. the "leading forth the imprisoned in their bonds", refers to the fact that if a marriage is based on mutual merits there is rejoicing in heaven over that match, whereas if it is based on an absence of merits there is weeping, since G'd then has arranged their marriage against their (true) will (interests), and the marriage is not likely to work out.

If the pair have been matched in their relative *mitzvah-aveirah*, merit/debit ratio, there is cause for rejoicing in heaven, but not so if they are not well matched in that respect.

The word *zachu* they merited, means that if their merits are such that they marry the partner originally assigned to them before they were born, then *shorrerim* they sing in heaven. (Yalkut)

If ONE of the original parties has sinned more than the other, the resultant change in who is becoming their marriage partner presages an unhappy, unsuccessful union.

The verse in Deuteronomy 24,1, that if a man finds a *devar ervah*, some sinful conduct in his wife, and as a result divorces her and she marries someone else etc., he, i.e. the original husband is assumed to remarry some else.

The meaning of this passage, allegorically speaking – is that until these 2 souls had entered bodies they had both been sin free and well matched.

Life on earth has changed all that. This is what the Psalmist means when he speaks about *shoshanim*, meaning the two souls that had been intended to inhabit 2 bodies of a man and a woman meant to become man and wife.

As long as they had not sinned, i.e. that no foolish thoughts had entered their hearts, (*ruach shtut*), they were *maskil*, intelligent, hence sin free. (We follow the Talmud who states that sin can only be the result of foolish thinking. Sotah 3)

Such people will cause song and hymns in heaven both on account of their original pairing and because of the realization of their union in life on earth.

In connection with resolving the above mentioned contradiction in Sotah 2, a few more items deserve our attention. In Kiddushin 70, our sages heap excessive praise on a person who marries a woman who is a suitable mate for him. Similarly, the sages are full of condemnation for people who marry for wealth and other material considerations. In view of what we have explained about how G'd arranges marriages, it is difficult to see how someone can be blamed or punished for having married a partner designated for him in heaven.

By the same token, how can one expect a reward even for choosing a morally upright woman, when such a match had been predetermined in heaven anyways??

The answer, however, is that if a person who had NO sins selects a wife for inappropriate considerations, – such a plan is NOT thwarted, and he will wind up marrying a woman NOT originally meant for him. When THAT happens, – they cry in heaven. On the other hand, if a person who had already forfeited the mate originally designated for him in heaven because he had sinned, is meticulous in choosing a devout and G'd fearing woman as a wife, then his endeavors ARE rewarded, and he will find such a woman. In such an event, they rejoice in heaven over such a match.

This is so because the man had tried to leave behind him in this world children who would grow up to become *tzaddikim*.

The sons of Korach therefore express this feeling by saying "my heart has felt something good – I can speak about my deeds to the "king".

This prospective groom feels entitled to ask for the elusive mate that had at one time been designated for him in heaven, and which he has been unable to locate on his own. The principle *haba letaher messayin lo* if someone commences to do something constructive, he receives a heavenly assist, is then invoked.

After all, such a person would be entitled to ask (in the words of Deut. 30,12) "who will go up to heaven for us" to find my true soul mate so that I can wed her?

The Psalmist's answer to such a quest is "here the matter is quite accessible". (same answer that the Torah gives in the section quoted).

G'd, after all, has declared the absence of a suitable mate for man as being something that is "not good" (Genesis 2,18). It follows that the appropriate marriage is called *tov*, good.

The holy spirit in this instance assumes the pose of being the groom, saying "my heart has striven for the *tov*", the good, i.e. a suitable marriage partner. "I tell my deeds to the king" means "my intent is to comply with G'd's desires", i.e. I do not seek to marry a woman because of her wealth, or her physical beauty. In such an event, "my tongue", i.e. what I have said is immediately recorded in heaven, and G'd hastens to prepare the right mate for me.

3. The holy spirit applauds, describing such a person as *yafyafit*, doubly beautiful. The dual *yaf-yafit* refers to two kinds of beauty. Firstly, "your deeds are beautiful and therefore you have not forfeited the wife originally designated for you."

Secondly, the fact that you did not allow yourself to be guided by the physical beauty or material wealth or family fame, as does nearly everyone else, makes you doubly beautiful, i.e. *yafyafit*.

The holy spirit agrees that the groom is entitled to claim credit for his deeds and his thoughts, but NOT for his words, since these words have been inspired, i.e. represent the heavenly assist that is forthcoming when a person endeavors to do the thing G'd wished him to do. This is the meaning of *hutzak cheyn be-siftotecha*. G'd has extended His blessing to you because of the two acts of *yofi*, beauty, the ethically beautiful.

This blessing endures, *le-olam*, since it is superior even to G'd having assigned to you an *eyshet chayil*, a woman of valour who had however previously been assigned to someone else who has forfeited his claim to her.

4. The holy spirit continues with a warning. Seeing that G'd has

assigned your ideal mate to you, – do not squander your efforts on women, i.e. do not overindulge in sexual relations with her, but demonstrate your intent to become holy by refraining from excessive sexual relations even when these are permitted by Jewish law. (compare Proverbs 31,3 *al titen la-nashim cheylecha*) The true *gibor*, hero, is he who can control his passions, i.e. "keep your sword on your hip". (Avot 4,1) Here *yerech gibor* presupposes the ability to conquer unlawful desires, and the *ruach hakodesh*, holy spirit asks for the exercise of restraint. If you do THAT, this is your *hodcha vehadarcha*, your glory. (*Hod* refers to the physical glory, *hadar* to the spiritual glory)

5. The expressions "your majesty and ornament" referred to thus far, i.e. the indulgence in restricted sexual intercourse even with your wife, is only one aspect of your progress towards becoming the perfect personality. There is yet greater glory, i.e. *hadarcha tzelach rechav*, ride successfully. Your marriage will consist of the merging of two virtues i.e. "truth" as well as humility and righteousness.

The humility of the righteous is TRUE humility, since such a person might feel entitled to some pride in his accomplishment. If you possess or acquire THOSE virtues, you will be described as being successful in all matters. Although the "good" urge is described as *yeled misken*, a "poor child", (Eccles. 4,13) whereas the "evil" urge is described as "an old but foolish king", who will not allow the good urge to raise his head, once you have been paired with a suitable wife you will be able to subdue the *yetzer hara*, "evil" urge to such a degree that the "good" urge will overpower him, i.e. you will learn to perform *nora-ot* tremendous accomplishments.

It is your right side which will teach you to accomplish all this, i.e. *yeminecha*. Solomon in Eccles. 10,2 states that "a wise man's heart is on his right side", referring to the "good" urge. Every person has two hearts i.e. *levavot*. The reason the Psalmist says *torcha* will teach you, employing the feminine from instead of *yorcha*, the masculine form is because the subject in our verse is the word *yemin*, the right side. All parts of the body of which there are more than one are always feminine.

6. "Your arrows will be well learned", i.e. you will have the good fortune of raising children who are well versed in Torah. (compare Psalms 127,4 "as the arrows in the hands of a mighty man, so are the children"). The word *shinunim* is used in the same sense as in Deut. 6,7. (compare Kiddushin 30)

"Nations will collapse under you". The good that this world has to offer consists of 3 categories. They are 1) children, (continuity of life) 2) life itself. 3) the means of sustenance. Concerning the latter, the

Psalmist had said that the good intentions displayed in search of a suitable mate, evokes G'd's blessing, i.e. *al keyn berachecha elokim le-olam* (verse 3).

Finding the right wife is an essential step in securing sustenance. This is so because the letter *heh* in the word *ishah* woman, and the letter *yud* in the word *ish*, husband, combine to form the two lettered name of G'd, the source of all material blessings.

If, in addition, you will follow My advice, says the holy spirit, i.e. you gird your sword (verse 4), you will receive additional blessing not only in that you will have children but they will be well turned out. Concerning life itself, the Psalmist says that long life is granted not only if you are totally free from sin, but even if pestilence stalks the earth because of some sin, I will redeem you, i.e. substitute OTHER people's death for yours, so that you will continue to live on this earth. Those whom I shall substitute to die in your place are the *oyvey hamelech*, i.e. the enemies of THE king, i.e. G'd.

7. To explain why other nations would die in lieu of Israelites and why nations who in their hearts are enemies of G'd, will be your surrogates the holy spirit elaborates. Concerning the substitution of death of a gentile, the reason that the *tzaddik* referred to is *kissacha hashem*, Your throne G'd forever, Your *Shechinah* You made rest upon the *tzaddik*, so that he becomes like a chair for You. (Bereshit Rabbah 82,6, Rashi on Genesis 17,22)

Concerning the type of nations who will become your surrogates in that manner the only reason "enemy" nations will serve as surrogates is because *shevet mishor* an equitable sceptre, i.e. FAIR justice is dispensed by G'd, i.e. *shevet malchutcha*.

8. In order to comprehend this verse, let us first refer to the statement by our sages in Pirkey de Rabbi Eliezer at the end of chapter 16 that the groom is called "king". (based on Psalms 19,6)

This statement seems peculiar, since none of the attributes of royalty such as power are at the command of the groom, even allowing that he may be master in his own home! Such authority surely is very far from that wielded by a king! I believe the answer lies in a different direction.

We know (Talmud Yerushalmi Bikkurim 3,3) that he who marries a woman, especially if for worthy reasons, has his sins forgiven on the day of his wedding, as our sages derive from the verse in Genesis 28,9 "He married, *et machalat* the daughter of Ishmael". (her name had really been Bosmath) *Machalah* is a word like *mechilah*, forgiveness, pardon.

Furthermore, we know that every *mitzvah*, commandment performed creates angels, advocates, and even the grossest Israelite

performs many commandments as a matter of daily routine. This means that every Jew disposes of an army of advocates. Therefore, to call a Jew a king is hardly a misnomer.

Tragically, most Jews also create armies of adversaries by the transgressions they become guilty of every time they commit a sin. The groom whose army of adversaries is wiped out on the day he weds, is left with only the army of advocates, and can therefore rightly be compared to a king.

However, not everyone who marries has his sins forgiven. Only those grooms who wed for a worthy motive, not those who use marriage to assure themselves of material wealth, honour or the physical beauty of their brides.

Possibly, this is what the holy spirit in our Psalm is driving at when he addresses such a groom.

"If you loved righteousness and hated evil", then G'd has anointed you with the oil of gladness, more so than your companions. In such an event, because you have said ***ma-assay lamelech*** my deeds are oriented towards THE king, i.e. G'd, He in turn treats you like a king on the day you execute your plan and wed a suitable mate for suitable reasons.

The ***soney resha***, those who hate evil (without loving righteousness), are those who wed the right girl for the WRONG reasons, or the "wrong girl for the right reason".

9. In Berachot 6, we are told "anyone who enjoys the feast of a groom (wedding) without contributing his share to gladden the heart of the groom transgresses 5 ***kolot***, "voices". If, however, he does make a positive contribution to the groom's joy, he gains the merit of the Torah, which is acquired by any of 5 ***kolot***, "voices", since we find the word ***kol*** 5 times in connection with the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. (compare Exodus chapter 19 and 20)

Another view equates making the groom happy with the experience of seeing the temple rebuilt.

It is strange that there is such a NEED to help make the groom happy. Is the day of his wedding not the time when he is happy anyways?! Why would the mere lack of adding to the groom's joy be considered culpable?

Any thinking person is apt to be sad on the day of his wedding, since it calls to his mind the day of his death. After all, the need to take a wife stems from the need to produce children to leave behind on earth after one's death. If that is so, even the fact that one's sins have been forgiven is due to fear of punishment, leads to a repentance from fear, i.e. a reminder of death. Such repentance does not transform erstwhile sins into merits. Hopefully, they are elevated

to assume the status of having been committed unintentionally (Yuma 86).

The groom's companions, by helping him rejoice contribute to his erstwhile sins being converted into merits, since his *teshuvah* now is due to positive considerations, becomes a repentance from "love". They therefore reinforce the army of angels (advocates) at the groom's disposal, enhancing his status as "king". At the same time, they wipe out the "troops" which had been arraigned against him, i.e. the creations due to his former sins.

Clearly then, helping the groom rejoice is something of major significance. This is what the Psalmist refers to when he says that *bigdotecha*, i.e. *be-gidotecha* your former betrayals have become fragrant as the spices *mor* and *ahalot*. They now smell like *ketziot* cassia bark, a reference to the sins that have now become transformed into merits. *Mor ahalot* are fragrances available in this world, *ketziah* is a hint of other worldly fragrances, deriving from *heycheley sheyn*, celestial palaces. Just as the teeth are hidden by the lips, so the *hecheley sheyn* refer to hidden palaces, i.e. celestial sanctuaries. He who makes the *chatan*, bridegroom glad, helps to assure him of his status becoming indeed king like.

10. Having explained how the *zivug sheyni*, the second mating, i.e. the wedding of two people in this life comes about as a result of the accomplishments or lack thereof by the respective pair of human beings, the Psalmist explains what the *zivug rishon*, the original mating was all about.

This is in order to make man aware of the great kindness of G'd, so that he will be properly grateful to G'd who has made such efforts to provide the right wife for him. This is what is meant by "daughters of kings", i.e. highly placed women who are anxious to become your wives, i.e. *biykrotecha*. In spite of the presence of such women, do not despair, do not abandon your criteria for a suitable wife. Remember *nitzvah shegal liymincha*, the proper one already stands ready at your right side, she has been made available for you already since before you were even born when the souls were created in heaven in pairs. This is the reference to the *zivug rishon* in the Talmud Sotah 2.

ketem aphir is a simile for the kind of jewelry you acquire when guided by the proper motivation in the choice of your mate.

11. After having described how the prospective bride had been adorned with *ketem ophir* before entering this life, the Psalmist explains that G'd had so equipped the bride in order to reconcile her to leaving heaven and entering this world to be united with the soul of the groom on earth. The jewels on her head are to compensate

for the fact that henceforth she will make her husband the centre of all her attentions. This, even if materially speaking her husband to be is wealthy like a king.

12. Her husband, i.e. the "king" should be desirous of his bride's beauty. Even if he cannot hang jewelry around your neck, – as long as he would do so were he able to, that should be enough for you, just like the daughter of the wealthy. (Rabbi Akiva's wife married him, though Rabbi Akiva was penniless and she was the daughter of one of the wealthiest men of her time, Kalba ben Sabua, Nedarim 50 and Shabbat 59).

When at a later stage, Rabbi Akiva became a man of means, he provided his wife with the famous ***yerushalayim shel zahav*** an ornament depicting the city of Jerusalem, made entirely of gold. She wore this on her forehead. His bride had accepted his good intention at the time of their wedding as being equal to the actual deed.

13. The bride is also commanded to observe rules of chastity. This is what is meant by ***bat tzor bemincha panayich.*** Solomon calls a woman's sex appeal ***eyshet kessilut*** a foolish woman, since her attraction is merely the illusion created by the ***yetzer hara***, evil urge. (Proverbs 9,13) The temptation can either take the form of sexual lust or greed for money. These two principal forms of greed lead to every other sin imaginable. The "evil" urge makes you believe that by exploiting someone's lust you could join the rich and influential of the nation. This prospect could lead a formerly chaste woman to leave the morally secure walls of her house in search of wealth to be acquired through granting her sexual favors to the rich men of the town.

14. Inasmuch as the glory of the chaste woman is within the walls of her home and not outside it, the Psalmist reminds her that what distinguishes her within the home is far more valuable than what she could hope to acquire by coveting wealth on the outside.

15. The Psalmist, i.e. the holy spirit, now resumes speaking to the man, the soul of the groom before the bride comes. He says to her (the soul) that it is not enough that you marry the right kind of woman, but you should make embroideries, i.e. fulfil the various commandments in their manifold variations and embellishments. When you perform the ***mitzvot*** in such a manner, you will be transported to THE king, i.e. you will see the face of G'd. Then, the companions, i.e. souls, the other people who have refrained from following the dictates of their evil urge and have therefore remained "virgin", ***betulot***, untainted by sexual indulgences, will nonetheless remain behind you (in a lower of the 7 layers of heaven), since they did not perform the ***mitzvot*** as ***rekamot***, "embroidered", i.e. in the

46 *For the leader. Of the Korahites; on* alamoth. *A song.*
[2]*God is our refuge and stronghold, a help in trouble, very near.*
[3]*Therefore we are not afraid though the earth reels, though mountains topple into the sea–*
[4]*its waters rage and foam; in its swell mountains quake.* Selah.
[5]*There is a river whose streams gladden God's city, the holy dwelling-place of the Most High.*
[6]*God is in its midst, it will not be toppled; by daybreak God will come to its aid.*

most beautiful manner possible.

The highest layer of the 7 heavens is called *kat yesharim*, the class of the upright (Midrash Tehillim 11). Your shining example will help uplift your companions so that they will be brought to you *muvaot lach.*

16. They will be brought in joy to the palace of THE king, i.e. G'd, due to your merit, says the *ruach hakodesh*, the holy spirit to the groom. However, they will not enjoy seeing the face of G'd as you do.

17. The holy spirit adds that if you (the groom) enjoy the merit of your fathers in addition to your own merit, your well turned out children will occupy high positions, since as Torah scholars they are entitled to do so. They will be in a position to command the sun to stop orbiting etc. as explained in our other commentary on this chapter.

18. Furthermore, if there will be three consecutive generations of Torah scholars and pious men in your family, Torah and *mitzvah* performance will not cease forever in your family, i.e. I will cause My name to be mentioned forever and as a result gentile nations will pay homage to you forever.

Psalm 46

1. The Psalmist may be referring to the souls of Israel as *alomot* maidens similar to the term used in Song of Songs 1,3 "therefore the maidens love You". The Psalmist therefore is extolling the virtues of Israel.

2. Israel requests that the attribute of *elokim*, i.e. of justice should be its refuge and strength in order to defeat its enemies; to be its

מו א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לִבְנֵי-קֹרַח עַל-עֲלָמוֹת שִׁיר:
ב אֱלֹהִים לָנוּ מַחֲסֶה וָעֹז עֶזְרָה בְצָרוֹת נִמְצָא מְאֹד:
ג עַל-כֵּן לֹא-נִירָא בְּהָמִיר אָרֶץ וּבְמוֹט הָרִים בְּלֵב
יַמִּים:
ד יֶהֱמוּ יֶחְמְרוּ מֵימָיו יִרְעֲשׁוּ הָרִים בְּגַאֲוָתוֹ סֶלָה:
ה נָהָר פְּלָגָיו יְשַׂמְּחוּ עִיר-אֱלֹהִים קְדֹשׁ מִשְׁכְּנֵי עֶלְיוֹן:
ו אֱלֹהִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ בַּל-תִּמּוֹט יַעְזְרֶהָ לִפְנוֹת בֹּקֶר:

source of aid in troubles there is no need to pray, since *nimtza me-od* it is already present very much.

3. Therefore we do not fear even if the earth itself is transformed like a worn out garment (Isaiah 51,6), not when the mountains are moved in the midst of the seas (Isaiah 54,10) in the future when the gentile nations will see that our sins have already been expiated through the troubles we have experienced throughout our long period of exile, whereas they will experience all the retribution due them in one fell swoop.

4. At that time, the waters of the oceans will form great towering heaps as well as the mountains, because of the Lord's majesty. All will express their awe of G'd's almighty acts.

5. You might argue that even during our exile, the attribute of *elokim*, i.e. *Shechinah* had never totally departed from Jerusalem, i.e. from the wailing wall, (Zohar 2,4) and that therefore we can also expect help from this attribute at the present time, and that furthermore we know that the river Jordan rose up like a wall at a time when G'd had not even taken up residence in Jerusalem except in its heavenly counterpart, i.e. the celestial Jerusalem. (compare Joshua 3,13) It would be no more than logical then that since G'd has already taken up residence in the Jerusalem of our world that the river will display its awe and G'd would help us. (compare Tanchuma Pekudey 1 on part of this)

6. However, this is not sound reasoning, says the Psalmist. G'd's presence in the city at this time only prevents its total collapse, i.e. *bal timot*; the only time G'd i.e. the attribute of *elokim* will extend active help will be towards the "morning", i.e. at the time when the final redemption is about to occur, after the "night" of the exile comes to an end.

7Nations rage, kingdoms topple; at the sound of His thunder the earth dissolves.
8The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our haven. Selah.
9Come and see what the LORD has done, how He has wrought desolation on the earth.
10He puts a stop to wars throughout the earth, breaking the bow, snapping the spear, consigning wagons to the flames.
11"Desist! Realize that I am God! I dominate the nations; I dominate the earth."

7. At that time He will do as He did at the time of the revelation at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19,16) following the Exodus, i.e. on the morrow *boker* of exile.

At that time too, His voice caused the earth to melt (Yalkut Shimoni Yitro item 286) and our sages tell us that all the nations of the world came to Bileam to ask whether G'd was about to bring another deluge upon earth. The latter explained that G'd was giving his Torah, i.e. *oz*, might, to His people. Torah is equated with *oz*, might.

All this happened under the aegis of the attribute of G'd as *elokim*, i.e. *vayedaber elokim* (Exodus 20,1). It was the Torah which enabled Israel to hear G'd's voice and survive, (Deut. 4,33) hence it is clear that Torah gives strength *oz* to those who treasure and study it.

8. However, as long as we are in exile, we can only appeal to the attribute of mercy, *rachamim*, and this is what the Psalmist means when he says *hashem tzeva-ot immanu*, the merciful G'd of hosts is with us. Because of the nature of our souls, i.e. *alomot*, the G'd of hosts deals with us directly – not by means of *tzeva-ot* any of the myriad of hosts He has at His disposal, any of His agents.

The attribute of *elokim* merely protects us against destruction amongst the nations we find ourselves amongst, as long as the time of redemption has not yet arrived.

Elokey Yaakov is a reminder that while in *galut*, exile, we are not yet deserving of the help by the *elokey Yisrael*, our title when we possess merit. Still, *misgav lanu*, He is our tower even before the time of redemption.

9. Should we feel that we need to have access to the attribute of *elokim*, since by definition the attribute of *hashem*, i.e. mercy would not enable us to overcome our enemies, the Psalmist declares that

ז הָמוּ גוֹיִם מָטוּ מַמְלָכוֹת נָתַן בְּקוֹלוֹ תָּמוּג אָרֶץ:
ח יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ מִשְׂגָּב-לָנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב סֶלָה:
ט לְכוּ-חֲזוּ מִפְעֲלוֹת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר-שָׂם שַׁמּוֹת בָּאָרֶץ:
י מַשְׁבִּית מִלְחָמוֹת עַד-קְצֵה הָאָרֶץ קֶשֶׁת יְשַׁבֵּר וְקִצֵּץ
חֲנִית עֲגָלוֹת יִשְׂרֹף בָּאֵשׁ:

G'd in His capacity as the attribute of mercy has wrought desolation on earth, is quite capable of dealing with our enemies.

After all, it was G'd's attribute of mercy who said "I will wipe out the human species" (Genesis 6,7). Also, when G'd destroyed Sodom (Genesis 19,24) this was done by the attribute of mercy. *Gofrit va-eysh me-et hashem.* The fact that this was an act of the attribute of mercy is even repeated in that verse. Therefore, now too, the *hashem Tzeva-ot* is perfectly capable of dealing with our needs.

When our sages say that the wicked people are cursed, they mean that they cause the attribute of mercy to be turned into an instrument exacting *din*, retribution. (Bereshit Rabbah 73,3)

10. Although, on the one hand, G'd may cause wars to cease all over the earth – to prevent war being waged against us, nevertheless He breaks the bow and smashes the spear and burns the chariots etc. etc., i.e. the weapons of war.

In other words, G'd punishes the nations by acts of anger. Possibly, the reason the word *agalot* lacks the conjunctive letter *vav* in front is because the Psalmist brings his proof from what occurred when G'd fought the Egyptians at the sea of reeds. (Exodus 14,24 Mechilta). Then G'd removed the wheels from the chariots, burning them in the pillar of fire. The words *agalot yisrof bo-eysh* would be a reminder as well as a forecast of things to come.

11. After the sons of Korach have reminded Israel of the power of the attribute of mercy, suggesting that Israel is better off with the help of that attribute at the present time, the holy spirit injects itself speaking as if it were the attribute of mercy personified. It tells the sons of Korach to desist from citing further proof that the attribute of mercy also acts as exacting retribution. G'd wants it understood that there is no dichotomy. Mercy is not applied to Israel by one attribute, and judgement to the nations by another.

Hashem is *elokim*, it is one and the same G'd. Whatever I *hashem* do on earth, I do in the name of *elokim*, which spans the entire physical universe. I am exalted as *elokim* amongst the nations on earth.

12*The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our haven.* Selah.

47 *For the leader. Of the Korahites. A psalm.*
2*All you peoples, clap your hands, raise a joyous shout for God.*
3*For the LORD Most High is awesome, great king over all the earth;* 4*He subjects peoples to us, sets nations at our feet.*
5*He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom He loved.*

The 4 lettered name of G'd (hashem) is the name of the supreme G'd. This "name" i.e. function, does not deal DIRECTLY with either the nations, seeing that they are impure, nor with the murky physical universe called earth. When G'd is manifest as *elokim* this means that the name *yud-heh-vav-heh* has been converted, channelled through a pipeline to this earth to become *elokim*.

12. Therefore the best possible solution for us, Israel, is for G'd the Lord of hosts to be with us; for Him to manifest himself as He did to Jacob, i.e. as *elokey Yaakov*.

Psalm 47

2. The subject of this hymn revolves around a well known statement by our sages (Bamidbar Rabbah 1,3 and Talmud Sukkah 55) that the pagan nations benefit from the fact that G'd is our king, so that while they are subservient to our kings, who in turn are subservient to G'd, the king of kings, they receive some of the outpourings of G'd's goodness for us also.

Had they existed in this universe in the absence of a Jewish people, they would not have enjoyed many of the blessings they take for granted. This is why these nations actually lost out when our temple, – the source of their blessings – was destroyed. This is in essence what Samuel meant when he said that the principal difference between now and the messianic age is the political dependence of the other nations on Israel. (Berachot 34 et al.)

3. Although G'd is supreme and awesome, – i.e. beyond this world, – He nevertheless is a great king also on earth.

4. He subdues nations under us, i.e. Israel, and pagan kingdoms under our feet.

יא הַרְפּוּ וּדְעוּ כִּי-אָנֹכִי אֱלֹהִים אָרוּם בַּגּוֹיִם אָרוּם
בָּאָרֶץ:
יב יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ מִשְׂגָּב-לָנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב סֶלָה:

מז

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לִבְנֵי-קֹרַח מִזְמוֹר:
ב כָּל-הָעַמִּים תִּקְעוּ-כָף הָרִיעוּ לֵאלֹהִים בְּקוֹל רִנָּה:
ג כִּי-יְהוָה עֶלְיוֹן נוֹרָא מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל עַל-כָּל הָאָרֶץ:
ד יַדְבֵּר עַמִּים תַּחְתֵּינוּ וּלְאֻמִּים תַּחַת רַגְלֵינוּ:
ה יִבְחַר-לָנוּ אֶת-נַחֲלָתֵנוּ אֶת גְּאוֹן יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר-אָהֵב
סֶלָה:

5. This situation did not last long either during the period of the first temple or during that of the second temple. These temples had been erected due to the merit of Abraham and Isaac respectively. It is a condition that will prevail on a regular basis only once the third temple comes into being, which will endure forever, and which will be built due to Jacob's merit.

This will happen when G'd will choose for our inheritance to remain ours forever. This is what is meant by *ge-on ya-akov*, the pride of Jacob. This temple has been referred to by the term *ge-on* without further description, as we read in Leviticus 26,19, "I will break the *ge-on* of your strength". The reference clearly is to the temple. When the Psalmist here refers to *ge-on Yaakov*, clearly he refers to the third temple, the one to be built due to Jacob's merit. That G'd loves it *selah*, means that it will endure forever. We know this from statements in Pessachim 88 as well as other sources which describe Abraham as having referred to the temple as *har*, mountain, whereas Isaac had referred to it as *sadeh* field. Jacob had called it "house".

The blessings which will accrue to us once the third temple is built, will benefit the gentile nations MORE than the blessings they enjoyed while Israel had been in exile under their domination, and while the temple had lain in ruins. G'd's generosity will flow in greater abundance during the period of the third temple, since He had never loved the first two temples sufficiently to let them endure, i.e. *selah*. Already when they were erected, provision had been made to hide some of the holy vessels in anticipation of those temples' eventual

6*God ascends midst acclamation; the LORD, to the blasts of the horn.*
7*Sing, O sing to God; sing, O sing to our king;*
8*for God is king over all the earth; sing a hymn.*
9*God reigns over the nations; God is seated on His holy throne.*
10*The great of the peoples are gathered together, the retinue of Abraham's God; for the guardians of the earth belong to God; He is greatly exalted.*

destruction. (Yuma 53) This is hinted at in the Torah in the verse (Leviticus 16,3) "with this Aaron will enter the sanctuary", the numerical value of the word ***bezot***, with this, is 410, – the number of years the first temple stood.

During the period of the second temple, 5 important accessories including the holy ark were never restored. (compare our commentary on Psalms 24, verse 1)

Psalms 127,1 already spells out clearly that in order to endure, G'd Himself has to build the temple.

Had the nations only realized the extent to which they have benefited from the first and the second temple, they would never have destroyed them. When the third temple will be built, and the nations will realize the advantage they derive from this, they will be content. That is the meaning of Maimonides in Hilchot Teshuvah chapter 9, halachah 2. (along the lines of Samuel in Berachot 34, quoted earlier).

6. Should you argue that there is no guarantee that at the time Israel will not sin again and by provoking G'd's anger forfeit the nations' blessings, and that therefore how can they be assured of enduring welfare thanks to our own well being? The Psalmist says that this is not a realistic worry. When G'd manifests Himself as ***elokim***, i.e. as the attribute of justice with the sound of the ***teruah***, we would immediately humble ourselves, so that any sins would not be allowed to accumulate and have the kind of snowballing effect that could delay the repentance process. Our repentance will convert the attribute of justice into that of mercy, i.e. the ***kol shofar***, the sound of the ***tekiyah*** instead of the ***teruah***. There will not be a delay in the ***teshuvah***. This is meant when ***teruah*** is paired with ***elokim***, whereas the name of G'd the merciful, i.e. ***hashem*** is paired with ***kol shofar***.

7. While you nations who serve idols benefit from the essence of goodness G'd bestows on earth on our account, – you may sing His

ו עָלָה אֱלֹהִים בִּתְרוּעָה יְהוָה בְּקוֹל שׁוֹפָר:
ז זַמְּרוּ אֱלֹהִים זַמֵּרוּ זַמְּרוּ לְמַלְכֵּנוּ זַמֵּרוּ:
ח כִּי מֶלֶךְ כָּל-הָאָרֶץ אֱלֹהִים זַמְּרוּ מַשְׂכִּיל:
ט מָלַךְ אֱלֹהִים עַל גּוֹיִם אֱלֹהִים יָשַׁב עַל-כִּסֵּא קָדְשׁוֹ:
י נְדִיבֵי עַמִּים נֶאֱסָפוּ עַם אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם כִּי לֵאלֹהִים
מָגִנֵּי-אֶרֶץ מְאֹד נַעֲלָה:

praises in one of three possible ways. Either you sing to Him, without expressing feelings of gratitude to us (Israel) who have served as the instrument channelling blessings your way, or be recognizing that due to the fact that the Lord is OUR king, you indirectly benefit from our wellbeing. Or, you recognize the Lord also as YOUR king, so that you will not receive His blessings as parasites, feeding on us, but in your own right, inasmuch as G'd is the king of the whole earth.

This is the Psalmist's meaning when repeating three times the call to the nations to sing to G'd.

If you sing to G'd because you recognize Him also as your king, i.e. that you refer to Him as the king of the universe just as we do, and you employ the musical instrument known as *maskil*, just as we do when singing to Him, you should sing also to us, since the universe was created only for our sake. (Tana de bey Eliyahu chapter 14).

9. However, NEVER think that he can be your king WITHOUT being our king. If G'd were to relate as king only to you, i.e. *goyim*, this would not even be beneficial to you. Such a situation existed prior to Abraham, when G'd had withdrawn from mankind to sit on His throne ONLY in the celestial spheres, and mankind was visited by a string of catastrophes starting with the permanent flooding of one third of the surface of the land area of the globe. This happened during the generation of Enosh and is reported in Talmud Yerushalmi Shekalim and Bereshit Rabbah.

This was followed by the deluge (Genesis 6,17) and still later the dispersal of mankind from the site of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11,8). All this shows that relating to G'd even recognizing Him as king, while bypassing the good services of Israel, would not benefit the nations of the earth.

10. It is better for you (gentile nations) then to follow after us and enjoy G'd's blessings as part of the goodness we receive from G'd, since that eliminates the danger of G'd withdrawing to His celestial spheres and the resulting devastations because punishment did not follow the crime immediately.

48 *A song. A psalm of the Korahites.*
[2]*The LORD is great and much acclaimed in the city of our God, His holy mountain–*
[3]*fair-crested, joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, summit of Zaphon, city of the great king.*
[4]*Through its citadels, God has made Himself known as a haven.*
[5]*See, the kings joined forces; they advanced together.*
[6]*At the mere sight of it they were stunned, they were terrified, they panicked;*
[7]*they were seized there with a trembling, like a woman in the throes of labor,*
[8]*as the Tarshish fleet was wrecked in an easterly gale.*

maginey aretz means that it is the Jewish people who protect the gentile nations against G'd judging them by the attribute of justice, *me-od na-alah* due to G'd residing only in the "highest" regions.

Psalm 48

2. During the era of the temple, G'd could be described as *gadol*, great, since *ir elokeynu*, the city of our Lord was manifest to all. After the destruction of the temple, G'd is still praised greatly, since even the mountain on which the temple used to stand is still referred to as *har kodsho* the mountain of His holiness, His sanctuary.

3. The beauty of its scenery, i.e. its essence provided joy for the whole globe, – since all nations benefited from G'd's largesse dispensed via the temple. As our sages (see chapter 47,2) said "if the nations had only known the extent of their blessings due to the temple, they would never have destroyed it".

The temple, i.e. its *nof* is compared to the boughs of a tree which sheds its joy, its shade over the entire earth. This is the extent of G'd's generosity that the nations received during its existence. But *har tziyon*, when only the mountain of Zion remained, *yarksey tzafon* the northern sides, i.e. Babylon became the city of the great king, seeing the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, had moved there. (based on Megillah 29, see our commentary on chapter 10,1)

4. Even so, this does not mean that the *Shechinah* departed from Zion completely. G'd is still within her, i.e. *be-armenoteha*, in her stronghold. The reason the Psalmist expresses a degree of praise,

מח א שִׁיר מִזְמוֹר לִבְנֵי-קֹרַח:
ב גָּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַר-קָדְשׁוֹ:
ג יְפֵה נוֹף מְשׂוֹשׂ כָּל-הָאָרֶץ הַר-צִיּוֹן יַרְכְּתֵי צָפוֹן
קִרְיַת מֶלֶךְ רָב:
ד אֱלֹהִים בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ נוֹדַע לְמִשְׂגָּב:
ה כִּי הִנֵּה הַמְּלָכִים נוֹעֲדוּ עָבְרוּ יַחְדָּו:
ו הֵמָּה רָאוּ כֵּן תָּמָהוּ נִבְהֲלוּ נֶחְפָּזוּ:
ז רְעָדָה אֲחָזַתַם שָׁם חִיל כַּיּוֹלֵדָה:
ח בְּרוּחַ קָדִים תְּשַׁבֵּר אֳנִיוֹת תַּרְשִׁישׁ:

i.e. *mehullal* over the destruction of the temple is, because through the fact that the temple had been destroyed as an act of the attribute of justice, G'd re-emerged in His capacity as the attribute of mercy, as protector of Israel. Our sages describe this as *kalah chamotto* His anger had abated. (Eychah Rabbah 4,14 on Lamentations 4,11 and Kiddushin 31)

G'd had poured out most of His anger on the wood and stone, i.e. the structure of the temple, instead of on His people. There cannot be a greater praise than the acknowledgement of the fact that G'd had transformed His attribute of justice into an attribute of mercy by the VERY outpouring of His wrath.

5–6. The proof lies in the fact that those who set out to conquer Jerusalem, i.e. "the kings who had assembled", despite their unity and combined great numbers, lacked confidence in their undertaking. They were startled, terrified as soon as they came face to face with the city, and they were anxious to hasten away.

7. Why had they been confident earlier on and had not been afraid of their undertaking? Because when they came within the sight of Jerusalem fear gripped them when they noticed the presence of the *Shechinah*.

8. They were scared that G'd would smash all their ships from Tarshish with an East wind. This would have cut off their escape route. They recalled what had happened to the Egyptians in the sea. All this proves that when they did destroy Jerusalem and the temple, this was really G'd's doing, though they acted as G'd's tools as it were.

9*The likes of what we heard we have now witnessed in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God– may God preserve it forever!* Selah
10*In Your temple, God, we meditate upon Your faithful care.*
11*The praise of You, God, like Your name, reaches to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is filled with beneficence.*
12*Let Mount Zion rejoice! Let the towns of Judah exult, because of Your judgments.*
13*Walk around Zion, circle it; count its towers,*

9. Since we know from many sources that the first temple was built thanks to the merit of Abraham, (compare our commentary on Psalms 2,6) the second temple thanks to the merit of Isaac, it follows that the first temple was reminiscent of the quality of loving kindness, Abraham's outstanding virtue. G'd therefore related to that temple first and foremost under the aegis of *rachamim*, mercy. (a form of loving kindness).

The second temple which had been due to Isaac's merit, whose outstanding virtue our sages have described as *pachad*, i.e. *din*, fear of wrongdoing, an endeavour to live up to the demands of the attribute of justice, lacked 5 components as is well known. Furthermore, we know from Makkot 24, that the very fact that we have seen the dire predictions of our prophets concerning the destruction of Jerusalem fulfilled, is our assurance that the prophecies of the same prophets concerning our rosy future will also be fulfilled.

This is why the companions of Rabbi Akiva when they saw him laugh when they saw foxes on the temple Mount, were reassured by his conviction that once the first part of the prophets' predictions had been fulfilled, fulfilment of the second part of their predictions could only be a matter of time.

Here we see the community of Israel, i.e. their spiritual equivalent state that "as we have heard, so we have seen", i.e. that having seen Jerusalem destroyed is not an expression of G'd's final disgust with us, but rather is the prelude to G'd Himself rebuilding an enduring Jerusalem in due course.

10. It is true that we used to think that G'd's glory was tied to the continued existence of the temple, and that therefore we believed that the temple was indestructible, immune from attack, as we have

ט כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְנוּ כֵּן רָאינוּ בְּעִיר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת בְּעִיר
אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהִים יְכוֹנְנֶהָ עַד עוֹלָם סֶלָה:

יא כִּדְמִיךָ אֱלֹהִים כֵּן תְּהִלָּתְךָ עַל קַצְוֵי אֶרֶץ צֶדֶק
מָלְאָה בְנוֹת יְהוּדָה לְמַעַן מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ:
יג סֹבּוּ צִיּוֹן וְהַקִּיפוּהָ סִפְרוּ מִגְדָּלֶיהָ:

been quoted as saying by the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 7,4 "sanctuary of the Lord, sanctuary of the Lord".

11. However, destruction of the temple does not mean a diminution of Your honour EVEN in the eyes of the gentile nations. On the contrary, Your name ***elokim***, i.e. the attribute of justice and retribution was displayed. Therefore Your fame reached to the end of the globe. This is how we have explained Deut. 29,23 "the nations will say why did G'd treat this land in such a fashion? What is the meaning of His fierce anger?" They came to the conclusion that this was all due to the Jewish people having forsaken their covenant with G'd. (ibid)

They realize that if G'd had not struck the land, and thereby forced the people into exile, He would have destroyed the people themselves, instead. We see therefore that EVEN the gentiles appreciated what G'd had done.

12. Even Mount Zion as well as "the daughters of Yehudah", i.e. the cities, rejoice that G'd poured out His anger in a manner that enabled their eventual rehabilitation. ***lema-an mishpatecha***, so that in due course You will heap even more goodness on them because of Your judgements which they have experienced prior to that.

13. The descendants of Korach who lived during the era of the first temple knew that the city miraculously contained far more people than the actual physical size of Zion would be able to accommodate.

To demonstrate to Israel the nature of this miracle, the Psalmist urges them to walk around Zion repeatedly, to count its towers etc. to really experience the extent of that miracle.

14. After having done so, pay heed to the ***cheyl ha-am*** i.e. the multitude of people inside Jerusalem, which is far beyond what a city that size can contain normally. ***Passgu armenoteha***, consider her palaces, i.e. that the people do not live in cramped quarters; the

14take note of its ramparts; go through its citadels, that you may recount it to a future age.
15For God—He is our God forever; He will lead us evermore.

49 *For the leader. Of the Korahites. A psalm.*
2Hear this, all you peoples; give ear, all inhabitants of the world,

palaces are as if existing in the airspace only, since there simply is not enough ground space. Tell later generations about this miracle. We know (Avot de Rabbi Nathan 35,1 and Avot 5,5) that during the holydays when all the pilgrims stayed in Jerusalem, no one was ever heard to complain about feeling cramped inside the city. If these were the kind of miracles during the epoch of a temple which had never been intended to endure, how much more illustrious will be the future of Zion and Jerusalem when the third and enduring temple will be built?

15. This G'd who has performed miracles thus far, remains OUR Lord forever. From past experience, we derive the certainty that He will lead us beyond death.

Just as Jerusalem has been destroyed and will be rebuilt, so physical death of the Jewish people is not final, the glory of the soul at the time of the resurrection will be great. Our one time death need not be viewed as an act of retribution, but as a prelude to a more glamorous future.

Zion used to be spacious, only to shrink; in the days of the Messiah it will expand greatly again as we read in Isaiah 54,2 "enlarge the place of your tent, let the curtains of your residence stretch, spare not", – because (Psalms 122,4) "for there the tribes of the Lord went up". We have explained that verse as referring to the spiritual input which enabled G'd's presence and those miracles. When G'd withdrew, and that sanctity was absent, there was no longer such a spiritual element which could sustain such a large population and number of dwellings.

Psalm 49

1. This hymn has been composed to teach people, and to awaken the hearts of those who are in a deep stupor due to their constant pursuit of vain and transient values. It has as its purpose to remove the crown of pride from those who are drunk with wine or wealth,

יד שִׁיתוּ לִבְּכֶם לְחֵילָה פַּסְגוּ אַרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ לְמַעַן תְּסַפְּרוּ
לְדוֹר אַחֲרוֹן:
טו כִּי זֶה אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵינוּ עוֹלָם וָעֶד הוּא יְנַהֲגֵנוּ עַל
מוּת:

מט

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לִבְנֵי-קֹרַח מִזְמוֹר:
ב שִׁמְעוּ-זֹאת כָּל-הָעַמִּים הַאֲזִינוּ יֹשְׁבֵי חָלֶד:

and who put their trust in their possessions or armies, who rejoice without cause, without thought of the day they will die, i.e. who carry on like that since the day they were born.

Actually, in accordance with such a situation, the Psalmist ought to have composed a lament instead of a Psalm, i.e. *lamnatzeach mizmor*.

This is why the Psalmist mentions the *beney Korach*, the sons of Korach, because "they did NOT die" (Numbers 26,11) when their father died who had put his trust in his wealth and oratory. These sons had the occasion to compose this Psalm to convey this lesson.

2. Since the list of questions that could be raised on these verses is too long, – we trust the reader will understand the questions that could have been asked by merely reading the answers carefully. These answers are what form our commentary.

We know that *shemiyah* refers to something heard from afar, whereas *ha-azanah* refers to something heard from nearby. (compare commentary on Psalms 17, verse 1 based on Deut. 32,1 and Isaiah 1,2) Our sages explained that since Moses felt closer to heaven than to earth at the time he addressed the Jewish people prior to his death, he used the term *ha-azinu* when addressing the heavens. The reverse was true in the case of the prophet Isaiah.

There are two types of people. There is the category of people who do not involve themselves deeply in matters of this world. Then there is the category of people who view themselves as permanent residents on this earth. Concerning the former category, the Psalmist uses the term *shim-u*, describing them as *kol ha-amim*, whereas concerning the latter category he says *ha-azinu*. The reason he address the first category with the call *shim-u* is that that category of people does not require a great deal of admonition. They need not be brought "close". The second category, who view themselves as

[3]men of all estates, rich and poor alike.
[4]My mouth utters wisdom, my speech is full of insight.
[5]I will turn my attention to a theme, set forth my lesson to the music of a lyre.
[6]In time of trouble, why should I fear the encompassing evil of those who would supplant me—
[7]men who trust in their riches who glory in their great wealth?

yoshvey, i.e. *toshavim*, permanent residents in this fleeting world *cheled*, requires that they come "close".

It makes no difference in this respect whether those addressed are Jews, i.e. *beney adam*, since *adam* is a title reserved for Jews, or descendants of Abraham, who was called *adam* (compare Yebamot 61 and Shemot Rabbah 28,1, based on Psalms 68,19 that G'd accepted gifts from people called *adam*).

gam beney ish, also the sons of *ish*, refers to Noach who had been called *ish ha-adamah* (Genesis 9,20) a man of the earth, i.e. dedicated to earth and all that this implies. The Psalmist refers to all such people as *ish*, without further categorizing them, as people who make life on this earth their principal concern.

Only to Israel, who by definition is closer to G'd, does the Psalmist say *ha-azinu*, since many of them consider themselves as permanent fixtures in this world. The exception are the *tzaddikim*, the righteous who view themselves as *geyrim* strangers, mere sojourners on this globe, and who are altogether not subject to the Psalmist's words of admonition. (Chronicles I, 29,16 finds David describing himself AND his people as "we are strangers before You – we inhabit the earth like our forefathers while our days are like shadows") Since the *tzaddikim* are aware of their status, they need no admonitions.

3. The reason I had addressed *kol ha-amim*, i.e. including those who recognize that inasmuch as they are descendants of Adam, a creature formed by G'd Himself and hence of importance, is that their pride is vain, their life merely transient. The same applies to the *beney ish*, the descendants of Noach. The only place that true wealth and poverty can be found is in a world where you are all *yachad*, where you all live simultaneously. In this world different generations live during different eras, hence the *ashir*, and *ani* in this world are only relative terms, illusory, not reflections of true values.

He who is wealthy in this life may find himself poor in the hereafter and vice versa, as described in examples in Pessachim 50 and Baba Batra 10.

ג גַּם-בְּנֵי אָדָם גַּם-בְּנֵי-אִישׁ יַחַד עָשִׁיר וְאֶבְיוֹן:
ד פִּי יְדַבֵּר חָכְמוֹת וְהָגוּת לִבִּי תְבוּנוֹת:
ה אַטֶּה לְמָשָׁל אָזְנִי אֶפְתַּח בְּכִנּוֹר חִידָתִי:
ו לָמָּה אִירָא בִּימֵי רָע עֲוֹן עֲקֵבַי יְסֹבֵּנִי:
ז הַבֹּטְחִים עַל-חֵילָם וּבְרֹב עָשְׁרָם יִתְהַלָּלוּ:

4. The Psalmist who speaks inspired words, usually merely gives expression to the words he has been inspired with by the holy spirit; the ear of the speaker hears these words for the first time at the time the Psalmist expresses them. They were not outgrowths of his mind, he had not thought them before.

Subsequently, these words are recorded by the Psalmist for future generations. This is what David says here, i.e. the holy spirit spoke within me putting these words on my tongue.

We must understand here that David became inspired by the words of the sons of Korach to compose a song.

"My mouth WILL speak words of wisdom", refers to David saying that he has been told a great deal concerning death. However, "I will not publicly speak about all this, since it is not a subject for the multitude."

5. Therefore, I will only incline my ear to the parable. I will restrict myself with what I have to say on the subject in this hymn, and since the subject of death is one that causes both the listeners and the speaker sorrow, preventing the holy spirit from remaining active within the speaker, I will open with my harp to solve this dilemma. By doing so, I will be in a joyful mood so that the holy spirit can continue to commune with me.

6–7. The poor person consoles himself by saying that he has no reason to be afraid of evil times after death, seeing that due to his poverty he has already suffered so much on earth for his sins, that once he dies he could not have nearly as much to atone for as the rich person. The poor man's remaining sins are at worst in the nature of ***akeyvey yesubeyni***, something my heels stepped on without criminal intent. My very poverty is at least partial atonement, since it has led me to commit these sins that I was surrounded by. I am therefore calm about my fate after death, not like the rich, whose experience in life has not expiated for any of his sins, since he was always comfortable. I warn you rich people therefore not to put your trust in your wealth.

8Ah, it cannot redeem a man, or pay his ransom to God;
9the price of life is too high; and so one ceases to be, forever.
10Shall he live eternally, and never see the grave?
11For one sees that the wise die, that the foolish and ignorant both perish, leaving their wealth to others.
12Their grave is their eternal home, the dwelling-place for all generations of those once famous on earth.

8. By rights, if someone has a brother who has been taken captive, and needs to be ransomed by a substantial amount of money, surely his wealthy brother would do everything to redeem his captive brother. Therefore, should not the wealthy person be prepared to pay a heavy ransom for his OWN redemption to G'd? (for what he had done wrong in life on earth)

9. Why would you say that the two situations cannot be compared? That redeeming one's brother is redeeming his body, whereas redeeming himself is redeeming his soul? Is not redemption of the soul far more precious, important than redeeming one's mere body?

10. The rich man responds to this question by answering on behalf of the wealthy person who has refused to redeem his soul. Had his ransom money been capable of assuring him eternal life in this world, without purgatory ever, he would indeed have used part of his money to redeem his soul. However, since such payment DOES NOT buy him eternal life, i.e. since all the charity he gives in the world does not basically change his status, he did not think it is worth while. Besides, – had the rich man had a close up view of purgatory PERSONALLY, he would indeed have paid a great amount of charity in order to escape such an experience; but since he does not REALLY know what purgatory is like, he fails to use his wealth in a manner designed to escape purgatory.

11. The poor and destitute person responds by telling the rich, that if he does not ransom his soul out of fear of purgatory, why should he not do so when he observes the ***chachamim***, the scholars die, i.e. when he observes that these people have no fear of death? In fact many of them look forward to death with joy. (Proverbs 31,25, compare our commentary on Psalms 4,9)

We have many examples of ***tzaddikim*** being shown their future status in the hereafter. (Avot de Rabbi Nathan 25,2) How sad that those who have the material means to assure themselves of their

ח אָח לֹא-פָדֹה יִפְדֶּה אִישׁ לֹא-יִתֵּן לֵאלֹהִים כָּפְרוֹ:
ט וְיֵקַר פִּדְיוֹן נַפְשָׁם וְחָדַל לְעוֹלָם:
י וְיִחִי-עוֹד לָנֶצַח לֹא יִרְאֶה הַשָּׁחַת:
יא כִּי יִרְאֶה חֲכָמִים יָמוּתוּ יַחַד כְּסִיל וָבַעַר יֹאבֵדוּ
וְעָזְבוּ לַאֲחֵרִים חֵילָם:
יב קִרְבָּם בָּתֵּימוֹ לְעוֹלָם מִשְׁכְּנֹתָם לְדוֹר וָדֹר קָרְאוּ
בִשְׁמוֹתָם עֲלֵי אֲדָמוֹת:

share in the hereafter, are too shortsighted to invest part of their wealth in their REAL future?!

The reason the Psalmist does not mention that the wicked die crying (in contrast to the righteous) is simply that often this is not the case. When the Psalmist mentions that the rich leave their wealth to others, i.e. *acheyrim*, these "others" include their own children. They are "others" i.e. leaving his money to them does not accomplish anything for the survival of the father's soul in the hereafter and his eventual resurrection.

12. The wealthy man responds that the rich think their houses are forever, that they had been in their family for generations. They have been in their family's landholdings for so long that they have proclaimed their name throughout the lands.

This is not unlike the statement in Baba Kama 102 that when land transactions take place, the name of the Exilarch (leader of the Jewish community in the Babylonia) would be mentioned in the document of sale, to prevent any subsequent claims. This was so even though the exilarch was not a party to any of the transactions. The prestige of the Exilarch was such that no one would dare challenge a document which the Exilarch had been party to.

This is similar to what the Psalmist here calls "the people called their lands by the name of the wealthy owners", i.e. they described the lands they bought as being situated near certain well known wealthy people's holdings. The "feudal" lands were viewed as having been owned by their respective families "forever".

Because many rich families have owned their wealth for many generations, they take their status for granted, and do not examine their lifestyle and philosophy, and they see no reason to change and improve their ways. They are confirmed in their esteem of the value of their wealth by the very fact that it has stood their families in such good stead for so many generations.

13*Man does not abide in honor; he is like the beasts that perish.*
14*Such is the fate of those who are self-confident, the end of those pleased with their own talk.* Selah.
15*Sheeplike they head for* Sheol, *with Death as their shepherd.*
The upright shall rule over them at daybreak, and their form shall waste away in Sheol *till its nobility be gone.*
16*But God will redeem my life from the clutches of* Sheol, *for He will take me.* Selah.

13. The poor man replies that such a philosophy could be understood if indeed possession of wealth had made the lives of such wealthy aristocrats one of quiet contentment. They could then have deluded themselves that this is all there could be to life on this planet.

The fact is however, that everyone of them, at the time he dies, leaves behind at least half of his aspirations unfulfilled! (Kohelet Rabbah 1,13) Such wealthy people, as a rule, are under pressure day and night, i.e. *adam bi-yekar bal yalin*, a man's very wealth is what does not let him sleep.

The poor person scorns the wealthy by pointing out that the very wealth which should have allowed him to pursue a life devoid of worries, is what caused most of his problems. Preserving and amassing wealth is so time consuming and nerve racking that it keeps him awake at night and causes him constant irritations until he can be compared to the beasts.

Though man is basically, *adam*, HE is compared to *tzon*, a flock of sheep. As in Ezekiel 34,31, "now you My sheep – are *adam*. The idea is that just as sheep suffer beatings and do not retaliate, and just like sheep have to follow their shepherd, so Israel is drawn after Me" etc. This makes *behemot*, beasts the subject in the metaphor, and man the object.

Because man (the rich) makes preoccupation with the transient values of this life his main concern, he becomes like the beast whose only concern is to fill its stomach.

Another way that man and beast are alike is that the beasts end their lives being slaughtered, whereas man also dies. (Berachot 17)

Man's life does not achieve its purpose until the moment he dies, (since even a *tzaddik* could have a moral relapse while alive) neither does the pure domestic animal achieve its purpose until it is slaughtered and serves as food for the righteous, or as a sacrifice on

יג וְאָדָם בִּיקָר בַּל-יָלִין נִמְשַׁל כַּבְּהֵמוֹת נִדְמוּ׃
יד זֶה דַרְכָּם כֶּסֶל לָמוֹ וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם בְּפִיהֶם יִרְצוּ סֶלָה׃
טו כַּצֹּאן לִשְׁאוֹל שַׁתּוּ מָוֶת יִרְעֵם וַיִּרְדּוּ בָם יְשָׁרִים
לַבֹּקֶר וְצִירָם לְבַלּוֹת שְׁאוֹל מִזְּבֻל לוֹ׃
טז אַךְ אֱלֹהִים יִפְדֶּה-נַפְשִׁי מִיַּד שְׁאוֹל כִּי יִקָּחֵנִי סֶלָה׃

G'd's altar. This is what the Psalmist has in mind when he speaks about the comparisons (pl) between man and beast.

14. The poor man continues speaking about the rich, sounding somewhat fatalistic, as if saying "what is the use, this is his style, he keeps amassing worldly goods for himself, what a foolish enterprise!" If only his own way were due only to foolishness, at least he could not BLAME the rich. However, the rich proclaim that they want their children and their children's children to continue in their ways! *ve-achareyhem befiyhem yirtzu selah* They are all set towards death like sheep!

15. They are all set towards death like sheep! This is what the rich are like who make amassing material wealth their lives' task!

16. We have described *mashal vechidah*, as if the poor and the rich are arguing with one another concerning the correct attitude to death. (an alternative commentary on verse 5)

The poor man is happy in his afflictions, seeing in them a way of expiating for his sins prior to his death, helping him to avoid purgatory, whereas the rich relies on his wealth.

The poor has spoken of what will befall those who rely on their wealth.

Now, the poor person puts an end to this verbal sparring, saying that the Lord however, will redeem his own soul from the grave even if he has no special merits, since He had viewed poverty as the most severe of afflictions for his sins. He wishes that G'd should remove his soul from this life. (We are told in Shemot Rabbah 31,12, that Job who was willing to put up with all kinds of afflictions, considered poverty the greatest affliction of all)

The word *ach* always restricts the meaning of something previously mentioned. (Rashi on Leviticus 23,27) The soul says that it wishes that G'd would bring about its death, *yikacheni selah*, "will take me conclusively, finally".

The soul does not want to be sent into this life again at all, rather it wants to remain in the celestial regions till the end of time.

17 *Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich, when his household goods increase;*
18 *for when he dies he can take none of it along; his goods cannot follow him down.*
19 *Though he congratulates himself in his lifetime —*
"They must admit that you did well by yourself" —
20 *yet he must join the company of his ancestors, who will never see daylight again.*
21 *Man does not understand honor; he is like the beasts that perish.*

50 *A psalm of Asaph.*
God, the LORD God spoke and summoned the world from east to west.

17. We need to understand why it is a source of concern, i.e. *al tira*, to anyone that another person becomes rich, *ya-ashir*?

However, the Psalmist spoke about how the poor person compliments himself on his poverty, since he appreciates the positive aspects of his poverty. Now, we speak about *ish*, i.e. a *tzaddik* who becomes rich.

We know that the term *ish* is applied always to distinguished people, including even the spies Moses had sent out, who at the time when Moses had appointed them had still been *tzaddikim*, i.e. *kulam anashim* (Bamidbar Rabbah 16,5, Tanchuma Shelach 4).

When a poor person sees a *tzaddik* who is wealthy, he may well conclude that his own poverty is not a chance to expiate for any sins already committed in this life, but rather that it is a sign of being out of favour with G'd, an act of retribution. The Psalmist therefore reassures such a poor person, tells him NOT to draw such conclusions.

18. He tells him that he is still better off without even the wealth possessed by a *tzaddik*, and that G'd has greater liking for him. Proof is the fact that the rich even though he is a *tzaddik*, cannot take his wealth with him, whereas the poor can take ALL his possessions with him when he dies, i.e. ALL his accumulated good deeds. The rich man has to leave behind the dividends of his *mitzvot*, i.e. his wealth, whereas the poor takes both capital and interest of his good deeds with him into the hereafter. (see our commentary on Proverbs 8,21)

19. Neither begrudge the wealthy *tzaddik* the fact that during his

יז אַל-תִּירָא כִּי יַעֲשֹׁר אִישׁ כִּי-יִרְבֶּה כְּבוֹד בֵּיתוֹ׃
יח כִּי לֹא בְמוֹתוֹ יִקַּח הַכֹּל לֹא יֵרֵד אַחֲרָיו כְּבוֹדוֹ׃
יט כִּי-נַפְשׁוֹ בְּחַיָּיו יְבָרֵךְ וְיוֹדֶךָ כִּי-תֵיטִיב לָךְ׃
כ תָּבוֹא עַד-דּוֹר אֲבוֹתָיו עַד-נֶצַח לֹא יִרְאוּ-אוֹר׃
כא אָדָם בִּיקָר וְלֹא יָבִין נִמְשַׁל כַּבְּהֵמוֹת נִדְמוּ׃

נ

א מִזְמוֹר לְאָסָף אֵל אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה דִּבֶּר וַיִּקְרָא-אָרֶץ
מִמִּזְרַח-שֶׁמֶשׁ עַד-מְבוֹאוֹ׃

life on earth he can employ his wealth by doing charity and accumulate more merits in that way than can the poor. If a poor man supports himself by his own efforts such as Rabbi Chaninah ben Dotha, and refuses handouts, there is no greater act of charity than that. It entitles a person even to partake in the merits of the wealthy.

This is the meaning of *veyoducha ki teytiv lach*, "they will praise you because you have done well for YOURSELF". The world will admire YOU rather than the charitable rich man.

20. Not only this, but since all the souls of the righteous achieve constant promotion in the celestial regions, the poor in this world is assured of more rapid promotion, i.e. catching up with *dor avotav*, the generations of his forefathers, ultimately attaining a level called *netzach*, which is so full of blinding light that the *avot* even cannot behold it. (because it is too bright) All this as a reward for the afflictions the poor have borne with love.

21. Concerning the multitude of wealthy people whom you have admonished for their mistaken sense of values, – do not worry about your lack of success in convincing them of the true path in life, they are only beasts, a human being who does not use his G'd given intellect is not judged on the scale of human beings, is compared to the beasts.

Psalm 50

1. This Psalm is concerned primarily with demonstrating that some ideas about the Israel/G'd relationship are totally wrong.

Since the Torah laws depend for their performance on Israel's tenure of the land of Israel, the idea that the Israel/G'd relationship is restricted to G'd being Israel's national deity and that He has either abandoned His claim to sovereignty over the rest of the earth, or He

[2]From Zion, perfect in beauty, God appeared –
[3]let our God come and not fail to act!
Devouring fire preceded Him; it stormed around Him fiercely.

had never possessed such sovereignty is conceivable. Moreover, some people say that it is strange that when Israel committed the sin of the golden calf (Exodus 32,4) that G'd did not simply exchange such an ungrateful nation for one of the other 70 nations.

Also, why, instead of wiping out the Jewish people as a penalty for their sin, did He actually draw them nearer to Him by letting them build the tabernacle and taking up residence amongst them? Surely, all this points to the fact that G'd simply has no other nations and no other country that He can control, that He can excercise His sovereignty over?!

To dispel such erroneous thinking, the most serious of sins, Assaph composed this hymn. (Yuma 29) We are told there that *hirhurey aveyrah* the contemplating the idolatrous or sinful thoughts are often worse than the actual transgression by deed. (since the deed may not be performed consciously, intelligently)

Assaph, aided by the holy spirit explains not only the greatness of G'd, but that nothing that He does or demands is for His own sake, but only for the benefit of those of His creatures whom He commands to do something.

This is the meaning of *olam chessed yibaneh*, that the universe has been built by loving kindness, that G'd co-opted the attribute of mercy when He created man. (Psalm 89,3) Bereshit Rabbah 12,15 explains that G'd's original intention had been to use only the yardstick of justice when creating the world. When He saw that His world would not endure on that basis, He co-opted the attribute of mercy. This is why at the beginning of the report we find reference only to *elokim*, whereas in Genesis 2,4 we find the first mention of *Hashem*, the merciful one, when the Torah says "it was on the day the Lord G'd had made earth and heaven".

We have commented on the 10 directives with which G'd created the universe, by saying that although there are actually only 9 references to G'd having SAID anything, i.e. verbalized these directives, – the word *bereshit* is also a directive, though it remained a directive in G'd's mind, had not been verbalized. From this we know that when the Psalmist says in Psalms 33,6 "that the heavens etc. were completed by the WORD of *hashem* (i.e. the attribute of mercy)

ג מִצִּיּוֹן מִכְלַל-יֹפִי אֱלֹהִים הוֹפִיעַ׃
ג יָבֹא אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַל יֶחֱרַשׁ אֵשׁ-לְפָנָיו תֹּאכֵל וּסְבִיבָיו
נִשְׂעֲרָה מְאֹד׃

that G'd must have co-opted that attribute prior to giving a verbalized directive, i.e. prior to creating light.

This is what Assaph speaks about when he refers to both *elokim* and *hashem* as speaking when He called forth the earth. Verbalized directives occurred only after the attribute of mercy had been co-opted to the creative process.

Another aspect of Assaph's inspired statement is that *dibbur* sufficed, that it has not been a tiresome effort for G'd to create the universe, something He might have to rest up from at the end of the 6 days. Rather *davar*, it was all accomplished merely by word of mouth. By the word *eretz*, Assaph refers to the whole planet.

2. The reason G'd has concentrated His appearances, His manifestations only on Zion is neither that He is NOT sovereign in the rest of the world, nor that He is only a national deity of the Jewish people. Rather, *tziyon michlal yophi*, Zion is the epitome of beauty inasmuch as it is situated opposite the celestial sanctuary from which the light of the Divine emanates. (Tanchumah Pikudey 1)

3. Concerning the fact that G'd has tied His name to ours, i.e. that He describes Himself as OUR G'd (Israel's) although He has also created all the other nations, and there are NO national deities, – it is a fact that when He came from Mount Sinai to reveal Himself and give the Torah to us, He did not do so secretly. On the contrary, all the nations who were afraid of another deluge at that time, were reassured by Bileam that the mountains being on fire, and the thunder etc. were due only to G'd giving us the Torah. (Zevachim 116, Yalkut Shimoni Yitro 286)

Moreover, our sages say that the reason the 10 commandments commence with the words *anochi Hashem*, I am the Lord etc. is to give any competing deities a chance to dispute G'd's claim to the monopoly of being the ONLY deity. Shemot Rabbah at the end of section 29, says that G'd's voice at the time had no echo, so that no one could claim to have heard OTHER voices at the same time. (who might be viewed as competing with G'd.)

Had the other nations known of any other true deity, why did they tremble before Him at that time, instead of seeking reassurance from their respective deities?

[4]*He summoned the heavens above, and the earth, for the trial of His people.*
[5]*"Bring in My devotees, who made a covenant with Me over sacrifice!"*
[6]*Then the heavens proclaimed His righteousness, for He is a God who judges.* Selah.

4. This brings us back to the question why G'd forgave a people who had displayed SUCH disloyalty only 40 days after the revelation, and why did He did not exchange them for any of the other nations? He could then have performed miracles for such other nation similar to what He had done for Israel in Egypt and established His claim to such nation?!

The Psalmist replies that G'd is a G'd of justice, who deals with people's guilt on an individual basis.

"He calls to the heavens above" i.e. the heavenly tribunal which metes out punishment, death to those Jews who worshipped the golden calf, against whom however, there were no acceptable witnesses. (Exodus 32,35) He also calls ***el ha-aretz***, to the terrestrial tribunal, which sentenced those to be executed against whom valid evidence was found. The Levites executed such people. (Exodus 32,27) Moses also examined the remainder, making them drink of the water containing the ashes of the golden calf. (Exodus 32,20) Surely, a G'd who is a G'd of justice, does not collectively punish the innocent also??

5. Should you argue that such a severe sin, – committed without protest by any Israelite – surely deserved to result in total destruction of the whole nation, and that this is precisely what G'd had said to Moses "leave Me be, so that I can destroy them all instantly", (Exodus 32,10), the Psalmist states that at that time when G'd convened both the celestial and the terrestrial tribunals, He said to them ***essphu li chassiday***, gather for me My pious, i.e. do not destroy wholesale, spare those who have not sinned.

The reason was, that ***chassiday***, they are My pious ones, they have slaughtered the Passover lamb (and risked their lives for me). They also circumcised themselves, ***korey briti***, they put their lives in jeopardy for Me.

These were life saving deeds, which accounts for sparing the lives of those Jews who though not having participated in the worship of the golden calf, had not protested that sin either. (Shemot Rabbah 19,2.) The same Jews had not refused to circumcise themselves

ד יִקְרָא אֶל הַשָּׁמַיִם מֵעָל וְאֶל-הָאָרֶץ לָדִין עַמּוֹ:
ה אִסְפוּ-לִי חֲסִידָי כֹּרְתֵי בְרִיתִי עֲלֵי-זָבַח:
ו וַיַּגִּידוּ שָׁמַיִם צִדְקוֹ כִּי-אֱלֹהִים שֹׁפֵט הוּא סֶלָה:

though aware that the Egyptians could have killed them easily in their weakened post circumcision state. (compare Genesis 34,25)

In other words, these Jews all had previously demonstrated their faith in G'd in unmistakable terms. Therefore they deserved mercy at that critical juncture in Jewish history.

6. Still, the fact that those "innocent" Jews did not protest the criminal involvement in idolatry by their compatriots remains, and they were guilty by association? Not only that, the very numerical preponderance of 600000 Jews who did not worship the golden calf surely should have enabled them to stop the 3000 guilty ones from doing what they were doing? (Shabbat 54) Moreover, we KNOW that the sin of those who fail to protest idolatry is equal to that of the one who practises idolatry, and that such people are denied the chance to do *teshuvah*, to rehabilitate themselves? (Maimonides Hilchot Teshuvah 4,1) How then could the people make a golden calf at one at the same time as receive the heavenly manna as their daily food ration?

Why did G'd not at least stop the supply of manna? (Nechemyah 9,20)

Therefore, the holy spirit tells us not to be so amazed at all this; G'd wanted to demonstrate the extent of His righteousness, i.e. *vayagidu shamayim tzidko*, that in spite of the people having been guilty of the sin of the golden calf, He did not deny them their heavenly food supply. Wherein lay G'd's righteousness? He, the attribute of justice, acts as judge by parcelling out retribution for that sin in minute amounts, – but throughout the ages. This is why the Torah says (Exodus 32,34) "whenever there comes a day when I have occasion to punish you" (to think of you in negative terms, more precisely) I will punish you. (including a portion of the as yet unexpiated for sin of the golden calf)

This is why our sages (Sanhedrin 102) state that there is no "visitation" which does not contain additional harshness due to the sin of the golden calf episode.

This is why G'd did not need to suspend the supply of the manna to the multitude at that time.

7. Since G'd permitted the construction of the tabernacle, and allowed His *Shechinah* to dwell amongst the people, the impression

7"Pay heed, My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will arraign you.
I am God, your God.
8I censure you not for your sacrifices, and your burnt offerings, made to Me daily;
9I claim no bull from your estate, no he-goats from your pens.
10For Mine is every animal of the forest, the beasts on a thousand mountains.
11I know every bird of the mountains, the creatures of the field are subject to Me.
12Were I hungry, I would not tell you, for Mine is the world and all it holds.
13Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of he-goats?
14Sacrifice a thank offering to God, and pay your vows to the Most High.

could have been formed that He had allowed Himself to be reconciled with His people because He wanted and needed the sacrifices which Israel was going to offer on the altar of the tabernacle.

To refute such an idea, the Psalmist says "listen my people etc." There are two categories of Jews, the multitude called *ami*, and the elite called *Israel*. The first category needs to bring sacrifices to atone for certain types of sins committed, – not for G'd's sake–."

The second category called *Israel*, i.e. the righteous, do not need to offer any sacrifices at all.

To the first group G'd addresses Himself by saying *va-adaberah*, i.e. I will speak sternly. (Shemot Rabbah 47,3)

To the second group, the *tzaddikim*, G'd speaks softly, i.e. *ve-a-idah bach*. The term *elokim* refers to the attribute of justice, applicable to *ami*, i.e. My occasionally sinful multitude. The term *elokecha*, YOUR G'd – is reserved as a compliment for the *tzaddikim* who are not guilty of trespasses requiring G'd's forgiveness.

8. Concerning the former group, i.e. *ami*, G'd explains that though I relate to you practicing justice, do not compare this to the actions of a human king.

The human king, when angry at a subject, displays his anger in order to become the recipient of gifts by the person seeking his reconciliation, and you might think that I do so also, and that I remain angry until you offer me sacrifices! However, this is not so. When I

ז שִׁמְעָה עַמִּי וַאֲדַבֵּרָה יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָעִידָה בָּךְ אֱלֹהִים
אֱלֹהֶיךָ אָנֹכִי:
ח לֹא עַל-זְבָחֶיךָ אוֹכִיחֶךָ וְעוֹלֹתֶיךָ לְנֶגְדִּי תָמִיד:
ט לֹא-אֶקַּח מִבֵּיתְךָ פָּר מִמִּכְלְאֹתֶיךָ עַתּוּדִים:
י כִּי לִי כָל-חַיְתוֹ יָעַר בְּהֵמוֹת בְּהַרְרֵי-אָלֶף:
יא יָדַעְתִּי כָּל-עוֹף הָרִים וְזִיז שָׂדַי עִמָּדִי:
יב אִם-אֶרְעַב לֹא-אֹמַר לָךְ כִּי לִי תֵבֵל וּמְלֹאָהּ:
יג הַאוֹכַל בְּשַׂר אַבִּירִים וְדַם עַתּוּדִים אֶשְׁתֶּה:
יד זְבַח לֵאלֹהִים תּוֹדָה וְשַׁלֵּם לְעֶלְיוֹן נְדָרֶיךָ:

remonstrate with you, it is not because I require your gifts; even your total offerings, i.e. the ones completely consumed by the altar, and which are offered for the entertaining of sinful thoughts instead of sinful acts (Tanchumah Tetzaveh 15) I view as an affront.

If someone were to bring such offerings to Me daily, all that would prove would be that he constantly harbours such sinful thoughts. Such offerings are not basically welcome to Me at all.

9. Do not delude yourself that I derive a benefit from YOUR offerings, or even that I would take away any domesticated beast from your stable.

10. Since I own all the free roaming animals in the forests, and even the domestic animals on thousands of hills, these beasts are anyways not yours that I need to wait for you to offer them to Me, should I really want them.

11. And, if you suspect that domesticated animals taste better, and that for that reason I prefer them, this is also not so. I can always have the ***ziz saday***, the bird whose flesh assumes all kinds of taste. (Vayikra Rabbah 22,10) It is constantly at My disposal, says G'd.

12. Besides, if the sacrifices were meant to still My hunger, surely I would not leave the quantities and the timing for YOU to decide, (as per Leviticus 1,2) since I own all that is in the universe.

13. The whole question is so ludicrous since it is well known that I do not eat the flesh of bulls etc. I do not need food to sustain Me.

14. If I accept offerings of animals altogether, the reason is not the intrinsic value of the animal. Rather, I am interested in man's confession on the head of the animal (substitute for his own life) in a mood of deep humility and contrition. (Psalms 51,19)

15*Call upon Me in time of trouble; I will rescue you, and*
you shall honor Me."
16*And to the wicked, God said: "Who are you to recite*
My laws, and mouth the terms of My covenant,
17*seeing that you spurn My discipline, and brush My*
words aside?
18*When you see a thief, you fall in with him, and throw*
in your lot with adulterers;
19*you devote your mouth to evil, and yoke your tongue to*
deceit;
20*you are busy maligning your brother, defaming the son*
of your mother.
21*If I failed to act when you did these things, you would*
fancy that I was like you; so I censure you and confront
you with charges.

The meaning of *todah* as confession, instead of "gratitude" we also find in connection with Achan (Joshua 7,19). Not only is that the attitude needed when offering a sin offering, but even when bringing a sacrifice representing a freely made vow, since I do not ask for such a vow to be made, and unless you found yourself in serious difficulties, such as Jacob when fleeing from the wrath of his brother Esau, or Israel after suffering defeat at the hands of the Canaanites, (Numbers 21,2) I do not encourage vows, says G'd.

15. If you conduct yourselves in this fashion and call on Me on a day of distress, even if you do not pray at length, (Job 36,19), but merely "call" on Me, "I will rescue you", i.e. I personally, not My agent, says G'd. You are honouring Me by merely calling on Me.

16. Should someone argue that G'd also listens to the prayers of the wicked, the Psalmist replies that G'd says to the wicked "even if he invokes My 13 attributes, I will not answer him". To understand the verse, we must relate two statements by our sages. The Zohar on Parshat Va-eyrah reports that at a time of pestilence, recital of the passage dealing with the offering of the incense offered in the temple, will help arrest the plague. This happened during the lifetime of Rabbi Achai. Also, the Talmud Rosh Hashanah 17, describes G'd Himself as donning a prayer shawl, just like the Reader in the synagogue and reciting the 13 attributes He had taught Moses to recite whenever Israel had sinned, since the covenant between G'd and Israel is based on those 13 attributes of G'd. He had assured Moses at that time (after the episode of the golden calf) that he who employs these attributes when praying to G'd will not walk away

טו וּקְרָאֵנִי בְיוֹם צָרָה אֲחַלֶּצְךָ וּתְכַבְּדֵנִי׃
טז וְלָרָשָׁע אָמַר אֱלֹהִים מַה-לְּךָ לְסַפֵּר חֻקָּי וַתִּשָּׂא
בְרִיתִי עֲלֵי-פִיךָ׃
יז וְאַתָּה שָׂנֵאתָ מוּסָר וַתַּשְׁלֵךְ דְּבָרַי אֲחֹרֶיךָ׃
יח אִם-רָאִיתָ גַּנָּב וַתִּרֶץ עִמּוֹ וְעִם מְנָאֲפִים חֶלְקֶךָ׃
יט פִּיךָ שָׁלַחְתָּ בְרָעָה וּלְשׁוֹנְךָ תַּצְמִיד מִרְמָה׃
כ תֵּשֵׁב בְּאָחִיךָ תְּדַבֵּר בְּבֶן-אִמְּךָ תִּתֵּן-דֹּפִי׃
כא אֵלֶּה עָשִׂיתָ וְהֶחֱרַשְׁתִּי דִּמִּיתָ הֱיוֹת אֶהְיֶה כָמוֹךָ
אוֹכִיחֲךָ וְאֶעֶרְכָה לְעֵינֶיךָ׃

empty-handed. Rather, He will view such a recital like the offering of a sacrifice.

Concerning this statement in the Talmud, many have said that experience frequently has shown that no visible response had been forthcoming even when the 13 attributes had been invoked.

The author quotes *livnat hasapiri* as saying that this is precisely why the Talmud does not quote G'd as saying to Moses "say this before Me", but "they shall DO this before Me". G'd told Moses that success does not depend on merely praying, but on emulating G'd's attributes. As G'd is merciful, for instance, man must demonstrate that he too is merciful etc. When the supplicant fulfils THAT condition, he will not walk away empty-handed.

The Zohar chose the example of the incense offering to illustrate that man must make himself feel as if he himself were the sacrifice in order to achieve the results expected of such a sacrifice. G'd therefore says to the *rasha*, wicked person, "TELLING My statutes, quoting My covenant on your lips is not adequate, you must LIVE according to the covenant, – then I will hear your prayer also".

17–20. After all, you have rejected admonition, have cast aside My words. You have NOT offered your soul to Me like a sacrifice so that I could grant you grace. G'd describes a number of reasons why He remains mute in face of the prayer of the wicked.

21. For all these reasons, G'd says *hecherashti*, I have remained silent. You thought that I would be just like you. The holy spirit goes out of its way to address the *rasha* directly. I remained silent, says G'd, to cause you to return to Me in true repentance, not just in lip service.

You thought that I REFUSE to accept repentance, just like human

[22]Mark this, you who are unmindful of God, lest I tear you apart and no one save you.
[23]He who sacrifices a thank offering honors Me, and to him who improves his way I will show the salvation of God."

beings often reject the penitent. In order that you should understand your error, I have done two things. I will remonstrate with you and place IT before your very eyes, i.e. I present you with a list of your wrongs. This will show you that I do not despise you, but await your repentance.

22. The Psalmist addresses himself to all those who are like these *resha-im*, who have "forgotten" G'd while being so preoccupied with chasing after worldly goods. He says "understand this", i.e. the list of wrongs I have prepared for the *rasha* to persuade him to do *teshuvah*, repentance.

Up until now, says G'd, I have NOT despised the *rasha*. But, – if he does not pay heed, – I may have to punish you utterly, all of your merits having been wiped out. The reason the Psalmist says *shoche-chey* in the present tense is because he describes an ongoing process.

Verses 17–20 describe how the *yetzer hara*, evil urge undermines Jewish faith gradually, not daring to attack our faith frontally.

The Talmud in Sukkah 52, describes the process by using the prophet Nathan's parable to David as the example. (Samuel II 12,4) The *yetzer hara*, evil urge which had first been referred to as *heylech*, a stranger, gradually became *ore-ach*, a guest, and finally an *ish*, a man of authority. The subject is how David gradually became the victim of the notion that Bat Sheva was his for the asking. The *yetzer hara* does not tell the person to commit an active transgression, he rather advises inaction, i.e. "do not bother to listen to moral instruction".

Only later, having secured a foothold in the thinking process of his potential victim, (verse 18) does the *yetzer hara* advise overt sinful action, i.e. joining (not initiating) other sinners in their unlawful pursuits. (compare Bamidbar Rabbah 10,2, that the eye and the heart prompt illicit desires. Rashi on Numbers 15,39)

At a still later stage, (verse 19) you initiate sinful behaviour, using your mouth and tongue deceitfully. Finally, (verse 20) it becomes a regular habit to socialize without discussing Torah matters and corrupting the next generation by your conduct which includes slandering members of your own family.

23. Here the holy spirit reassures the penitent, and tells them that

כב בִּינוּ-נָא זֹאת שֹׁכְחֵי אֱלוֹהַּ פֶּן-אֶטְרֹף וְאֵין מַצִּיל:
כג זֹבֵחַ תּוֹדָה יְכַבְּדָנְנִי וְשָׂם דֶּרֶךְ אַרְאֶנּוּ בִּישׁוּעַת אֱלֹהִים:

not only will their repentance be favorably received, but their ultimate standing will be an even higher one than that of those who have never sinned at all.

While it is true that ***zoveach todah***, those who brought only thanksgiving offerings since they had no occasion to offer sin offerings, are indeed honouring Me, nevertheless ***sam derech***, he who had to set out on a different path, i.e. the repentant sinner who had previously not known the way, ***ar-enu beyesha elokim***, I will show him G'd's salvation.

This is the Psalmist's way of paraphrasing the Talmud Berachot 34 that "the ethical plateau attained by repentant sinners cannot even be attained by the totally righteous".

The reassurance could also be understood like this: A sinner will reason that if the ***yetzer hara*** was able to trick him into sinning while he had still been free from sin, possessed of moral scruples, now that his moral scruples had been defeated and he had become an impotent tool in the hands of the ***yetzer hara***, how could he ever rehabilitate himself?

G'd answers that all the sinner has to do is to make the first move towards G'd. After that, G'd will assist him to complete the path towards rehabilitation, i.e. ***ar-enu beyesha elokim***, I will demonstrate how G'd assists in the sinner's salvation.

The Talmud Moed Katan 5, reports that Rabbi Yannai had a student who raised questions during lectures, daily. Only on the Sabbath during intermediate holidays did this student not raise any questions. Rabbi Yannai applied to him our verse, (Psalms 50,23) changing the letter ***sin*** in ***sam derech*** to ***shin***, i.e. ***sham derech***. This matter requires further comment.

The student had felt that on that day when there was an unusually large audience due to the presence of many pilgrims, there was a danger that he would embarrass Rabbi Yannai if the Rabbi could not answer his questions immediately. He therefore preferred to remain ignorant on some point of law rather than risk embarrassing his teacher. At first glance it appears that we are dealing with a person who was carefully weighing the loss of a possible reward for the performance of one commandment, against the penalty of becoming guilty of a transgression at the same time.

Clearly, anyone who is ***sham***, weighing his deeds by considering

51 *For the leader. A psalm of David,*
2when Nathan the prophet came to him after he had come to Bathsheba.

the maximum reward obtainable does not display pure, altruistic love of G'd and His Torah!

Besides, what prompted Rabbi Yannai to change the wording of our verse?

In Bereshit Rabbah Parshat Vayishlach, we are told that *elokim*, i.e. the *Shechinah* in its full measure will not return from its self imposed exile until *acharit ha-za-am*, until G'd's anger has totally spent itself. At that time, the time of *yesha* salvation, only people who can be described as holy will remain on earth.

The student is described as *sham*, as having weighed carefully *derech* which path to take. Such careful weighings lead to a person becoming able to ascend the ladder leading ultimately to *kedushah*, holiness.

When Rabbi Yoshua ben Levi (on the same folio in the Talmud) speaks of those who "weigh their paths so carefully as *zocheh ve-roeh bi-yeshuato*, will merit to experience G'd's salvation, also quoting our verse here as support for his view and changing the word *sam* to *sham*, he is careful NOT to say outright that all such people are "written in for life after redemption", but rather *ar-enu*, I will SHOW them the salvation. (seeing something is not the same as partaking of it)

This helps us to understand what our sages have said in Baba Batra 75 on the verse (Isaiah 4,3) "whosoever will remain in Zion or be left over in Jerusalem (at that time) will be described as "holy", all those who have been inscribed for life in Jerusalem". Such people will be referred to as "holy" by passers by.

Since it is impossible for living human beings to actually see the *Shechinah*, except through its emanations, i.e. the changes on earth produced through the presence of the *Shechinah*, the Psalmist describes the restoration of the *Shechinah* on earth to its full glory as being "shown" to the survivors by its impact.

The "holy" people, however, will be able to see the *Shechinah* itself, not only through its emanations. They have attained a level that enables them to perceive a change in the *Shechinah*. The difference between Rabbi Yoshua ben Levi and Rabbi Yannai appears to be this: The former considered the careful weighing of *hefsed mitzvah*, loss

נא א לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
ב בְּבוֹא-אֵלָיו נָתָן הַנָּבִיא כַּאֲשֶׁר-בָּא אֶל-בַּת-שָׁבַע:

of mitzvah reward, against *zechar aveyrah*, "reward for a transgression not committed", as something less than totally laudable. Hence such a person would see only the emanations of the *Shechinah*. Rabbi Yannai, however, considered his student totally praiseworthy, since he ONLY weighed HOW to perform each *mitzvah* in the most suitable manner, both considering time and location of performance. He did not want to appear to be showing off by asking questions publicly, nor did he want to risk embarrassing his teacher. He weighed the correct time to perform certain *mitzvot* as well as the right environment. When one's motivation is so pure, one will be "shown" the *yesha elokim*, the salvation of the *Shechinah* itself. (not only through its emanations)

Psalm 51

1. It sounds strange that at a time when the prophet Nathan chided David on his conduct with Bat Sheva, that David should have felt inspired to compose a hymn rather than a *kinah*, lament, dirge.

Surely, the knowledge that G'd was angry at him, should have put David in a sorrowful, mournful frame of mind! Instead we have *lamnatzeach mizmor* a double expression of a joyful frame of mind!

This is why the Psalmist says "when Nathan had come to him". Normally, people who have committed a sin begin to rationalize their sin, to make excuses for themselves, to minimize the severity of their transgression. When G'd despatches a prophet who had not been a witness to the sin, – to admonish the sinner, this is proof that G'd wants the sinner to repent and to rehabilitate himself. It is proof of G'd's loving kindness for the sinner in question. It was this consideration which lifted David's spirits sufficiently for him to be able to compose a hymn rather than a dirge. He had become convinced that G'd wanted him to live.

2. The technical aspect of having slept with Bat Sheva, whom he knew to be destined to become his wife (Sanhedrin 107) and who was in possession of a bill of divorce from her former husband Uriah, (Shabbat 56) did not weigh on David's mind. He would not have repented that aspect, had not Nathan the prophet criticised him

[3]Have mercy upon me, O God, as befits Your faithfulness; in keeping with Your abundant compassion, blot out my transgressions.
[4]Wash me thoroughly of my iniquity, and purify me of my sin;

precisely for that, i.e. "he came to him concerning David's having slept with Bat Sheva."

Secondly, if G'd had conducted Himself with David as He did later during the punishment when He said to him "you have acted secretly" (Samuel II 12,12) whereas I am doing this in public etc.", David might not have repented.

It could have been Nathan's mission to admonish David publicly, something which would have been worse than death for David. Since Nathan respected David's sensitivity, and carried out his mission in private, David had another reason to rejoice and to compose a hymn reflecting his relief that G'd had shown concern and sent the prophet only to him.

David's double joy did not have to do with the subsequent statement by Nathan that G'd had forgiven his sin and that he would not die, (Samuel II 12,13) but was due only to the fact that a *mochiach*, a reprover had been sent to him and for the discretion exhibited by that reprover.

3. When someone has committed the type of crime against a king which carries the death penalty, and for which restitution is impossible, he incurs the king's anger and hatred. While the king hates him, it would be futile for such a criminal to appeal to the king's mercy and plead for a lighter sentence. Such a criminal therefore needs an interlocutor to soften the king's attitude towards him. Similarly, David asks G'd *choneyni*, grant me a favour, – and only afterwards does he ask for G'd's compassion i.e. *rachamim*.

Once David had secured *cheyn* favour, by securing G'd's *chessed*, kindness, he would need only *rachamim*, an attribute that is "weaker" than *chessed* in order for G'd to forgive his sin. This is probably what G'd had in mind when He said *vechanoti et asher achon, verichamti et asher arachem* (Exodus 32,19) that "once I have granted favour to someone, I am able to excercise My attribute of mercy".

The words *kechasdecha* in our verse, parallel the *vechanoti et asher achon* in Exodus, whereas the unusual combination of *mechey pesha-ay* wipe out my most serious crimes by invoking "only" *rachamecha* Your mercy, prove that once the ground has been prepared by granting a person *cheyn*, a degree of favour in the eyes

ג חָנֵּנִי אֱלֹהִים כְּחַסְדֶּךָ כְּרֹב רַחֲמֶיךָ מְחֵה פְשָׁעָי׃
ד הֶרֵבָּה כַּבְּסֵנִי מֵעֲוֹנִי וּמֵחַטָּאתִי טַהֲרֵנִי׃

of G'd, even the most severe sins can be wiped out with relative ease.

Regarding the relatively minor sins, i.e. *avonot*, David merely asks *kabseni* wash my sin off me; whereas regarding the inadvertently committed sin, *chatati*, he asks *tahareyni*, cleanse me.

Of the severe sins David says *eyda* I will REMAIN aware of THEM, whereas concerning *chatati*, the inadvertent sin he refers to only in the singular.

Another distinction David makes between *pesha* and *chet*, is that the former he refers to as *eyda*, whereas of the latter he says *negdi tamid*, they will always be facing me.

In the matter of Bat Sheva, there had been two *pesha-im*, severe sins and one *avon* and one *chatat*. We have explained this in our commentary on Psalms 32,5 "I will acknowledge my unintentional sin to You, will not hide my iniquity, and will confess my severe sins" The severe sins had been the indirect execution of Uriah, as well as the fact that he had been killed by the sword of the people of Ammon, i.e. by pagans. (who according to the Kabbalists had inscribed their swords with pagan slogans)

The *avon* David had committed was the desecration of the name of G'd by sleeping with Bat Sheva while her (former) husband had still been alive. This had given David a bad name in the eyes of his people, so that they had accused him of having committed adultery with Bat Sheva, (Sanhedrin 107) even though technically her divorce had become legal retroactively on the date the bill of divorce had been issued by Uriah. Since, however, Uriah had intended to resume married life with her on his return from the war, David had been guilty, morally.

Finally, his inadvertent sin, *chatat* had been the very fact that he had lusted for Bat Sheva physically. The reason this is only called *chatat* is that she had been meant to become his wife since the days of creation, as we have stated. (from Sanhedrin 107) David had been premature in translating this desire into consummation. (His guilt was that he coveted his own wife).

David here says that both *pesha* and *avon* will be blotted out through the suffering of afflictions. (Berachot 5)

David pleads that he is physically unable to absorb ALL the afflictions required to wipe out those sins. He therefore asks G'd to wipe out part of his sin, to enable him to expiate for the remaining

[5]for I recognize my transgressions, and am ever conscious of my sin.
[6]Against You alone have I sinned, and done what is evil in Your sight; so You are just in Your sentence, and right in Your judgment.
[7]Indeed I was born with iniquity; with sin my mother conceived me.

part by the afflictions he will submit to one after another. The lesser sins, however, David says, he wants to expiate for immediately.

4. David offers to pay off the guilt of *chillul hashem*, desecration of G'd's name, through undergoing *kevissah*, multiple "washings". (the word *herev* is spelled *harbeh* many, i.e. in many stages.) Concerning the *chatat*, he says *tahareyni*, cleanse me by an affliction which will remove that sin in a single instalment.

We have explained repeatedly that an attribute of G'd such as *din* or *rachamim*, justice or mercy, is never manifested in such a pure form that all other attributes are totally excluded. Since David discusses *din*, judgement, he addresses his plea to *elokim*, the attribute of justice. However, he appeals to the other attributes which accompany *elokim* in a minor key so to speak, by saying *choneyni*, appealing also to *chessed* and *rachamim*.

5. It seems strange that David could presume to ask that his most severe sins, i.e. *pesha-im* should be blotted out; also, how did he know that his *chatat* could be wiped out in a single act of affliction? Perhaps it would require two or more acts of afflictions?

Because of this, David continues "I do not mean to downgrade the severity of my *pesha-im* or even my *chatat*, – hence I will know them, i.e. I shall forever remain conscious of them, even after You have blotted them out from my debit ledger. I will forever try to improve my personal conduct in order to rehabilitate myself for those sins. We know from Midrash Tehillim on this chapter that those sins a man tends to forget, – G'd remembers. However, the sins that a person remains aware of, – are those that enable G'd to disregard them. It is this which Nathan had in mind when he said to David (Samuel II 12,13) "G'd has removed your sin, you will not die".

6. We have explained elsewhere that the term *yedi-ah*, knowledge, when applied to G'd, is something that does not commit Him to a specific course of action. This is distinct from *dibbur*, a thought G'd has already verbalized. This is why the prophet Isaiah 55,11, says "so My word which emanated from My mouth will not return to me empty etc.", i.e. what I have said will be carried out.

ה כִּי פְשָׁעַי אֲנִי אֵדָע וְחַטָּאתִי נֶגְדִּי תָמִיד:
ו לְךָ לְבַדְךָ חָטָאתִי וְהָרַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ עָשִׂיתִי לְמַעַן-
תִּצְדַּק בְּדָבְרֶךָ תִּזְכֶּה בְשָׁפְטֶךָ:
ז הֵן-בְּעָוֹן חוֹלָלְתִּי וּבְחֵטְא יֶחֱמַתְנִי אִמִּי:

Also, the Talmud in Niddah 16, when discussing the potential with which each embryo will be equipped, emphasizes that no WORD will be said about such an embryo developing into either a *tzaddik* a righteous person or a *rasha* wicked person. Had such a prognosis been verbalized in heaven, it would deprive a person to be born of his freedom of choice, would predetermine his path in life. (The fact that G'd is aware of how such a person will develop characterwise is not affected by this, however)

We have also explained Lamentations 3,37 "how can someone decree something by his say so, – as long as G'd has not decreed it"? in a similar sense. David says to G'd not to declare him guilty concerning Uriah, nor concerning his having taken Bat Sheva as his wife. His ONLY guilt was vis a vis G'd. – Since Bat Sheva had been divorced, he had not sinned against Uriah.

Even concerning my guilt vis a vis You, says David, I did so in order to prove YOU right. I had asked to be treated like the patriarchs. You had said that the patriarchs had been tested whereas I had not been. You, in Your omniscience were aware that I would sin if subjected to this test. Still, as long as Your knowledge had not been uttered by mouth, it would not have committed me. Only because You had STATED that I would not be able to stand the test did I become committed to fail, so that Your statement could be proven true. (compare Sanhedrin 107 and our commentary on Psalms 16,7)

For these various considerations, *tizkeh beshoftecha*, "you will find some merit when You exercise judgement".

7. On Psalms 17,3 "You have examined my heart", we have explained that David stated that the desire he had expressed that G'd should subject him to tests, just as he had subjected Abraham and the other patriarchs to test, had not been a pious sounding request, uttered from his lips outward, but had represented his true feelings. Had his failure to pass the test been due to insincerity at the time he had requested to be tested, he would have been truly guilty. But it had not been so. His failure did not stem from insincerity , but had been due to the need for G'd's word to be proven right. For

[8]*Indeed You desire truth about that which is hidden; teach me wisdom about secret things.*
[9]*Purge me with hyssop till I am pure; wash me till I am whiter than snow.*
[10]*Let me hear tidings of joy and gladness; let the bones You have crushed exult.*
[11]*Hide Your face from my sins; blot out all my iniquities.*

this reason our sages say in Avodah Zarah 4, "that David was not morally weak enough to have committed this sin, but that G'd wanted to demonstrate the power of an individual's repentance, by using David's experience as an example".

David says that G'd examines the heart and the kidneys if He want to establish someone's sincerity. Since David had entered this world partially due to an incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughters, the issue of which became his maternal great grandmother Ruth the Moabite, there had been some predisposition for his forming immoral relationships. He did not have to bear personal blame for such a predisposition. Our sages comment on the verse (Psalms 89,21) "I have found My servant David", that G'd found him in Sodom, i.e. he originated due to the flight of Lot and his daughters from Sodom. (Genesis chapter 19; compare Bereshit Rabbah 41,4) The word *immi*, my mother, refers to Ruth whom our sages describe as *imma shel malchut*, the mother of Royalty, meaning the Davidic dynasty. Also Ruth's having spent the night in the barn with Boaz was viewed by the latter as being improper, and he had asked her to insure discretion. (Ruth 3,15)

8. The reason that You G'd did not consider either Lot's daughter's conduct, or Ruth's with Boaz as improper, incriminating, is that *emet chafatzta*, You are interested in truth, and You knew both women's true motives which had been laudatory. I am certain, says David, that You will deal with me on the same basis, You have found truth in the various hidden places, i.e. *betuchot u-vesatum*, in my innermost being. Had my insides not been sincere, You would not have taught me wisdom, i.e. *chochma todi-eyni*.

9. The nature and the significance of the herb called *eyzov* is worth examining. Besides, the word *ve-et-har*, so that I may become pure, seems superfluous. Why does David describe the result as *ve-et-hor*, when the process had been called *chituy*, i.e. purging? Our sages in Tanchumah Parshat Metzora 3, describe the herb *eyzov* as the lowliest, least significant of plants. Its use was to remind the *metzora*, the person afflicted with that skin disease (Leviticus

ח הֵן אֱמֶת חָפַצְתָּ בַּטֻּחוֹת וּבְסָתֻם חָכְמָה תוֹדִיעֵנִי:
ט תְּחַטְּאֵנִי בְאֵזוֹב וְאֶטְהָר תְּכַבְּסֵנִי וּמִשֶּׁלֶג אַלְבִּין:
י תַּשְׁמִיעֵנִי שָׂשׂוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה תָּגֵלְנָה עֲצָמוֹת דִּכִּיתָ:
יא הַסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךָ מֵחַטָּאָי וְכָל-עֲוֹנֹתַי מְחֵה:

14,4–21) that his affliction had been due to arrogance, (like *eytz erez*, the tall cedar tree) and could only be removed after he had displayed humility. Arrogance and slander are cited as two of seven possible causes of such skin diseases in Eyruvin 16.

David says that "You G'd want me to purge myself of character defects – like an *eyzov*, i.e. I am to humble myself. As a result, *et-hor*, I will emerge purified. Just as You have prescribed such treatment for the one stricken with *tzora-at*, skin disease, if You will apply such treatment to me it will result in making me humble, making me aware of my insignificance vis a vis my Creator. The purification will follow almost automatically. David wants G'd only to commence the process, the rest will follow. (The author explained Lamentations 5,21 in a similar manner). *techabseyni*, once You start to wash me, I will emerge whiter than snow, i.e. You need NOT subject me to repeated washings (as in verse 4). David hints that his repentance then will be based on *ahavah*, love for G'd, – and will convert former debits into merits. (as we have explained frequently based on Yuma 86)

10. The one request I have, says David, is that You do not defer my forgiveness till the day I die, but just as You have informed me of the serious nature of my sin through the prophet, I wish to be informed of my pardon so that I can rejoice over the good tidings.

Concerning the forgiveness, – David refers to *sason vesimchah*, joy and gladness; concerning "whiter than snow", i.e. the conversion of debits into merits, *zechut*, he says "my bones will jubilate".

11. Since David had asked G'd to "wash away my sin", how can he now say "hide Your face from my sin, and blot out my iniquities"? Besides, in verse 4, David had referred to his *chatat* inadvertent sin and to his *avon*, sin committed knowingly in the singular, and to his *pesha* in the plural. Here he refers to both *chatat* and *avon* in the plural. Why is this so? Besides, why does he fail to mention his *pesha-im*, his most serious sins altogether??

The solution is this. Prior to this verse, David had spoken only about his conduct involving Bat Sheva. That had consisted of one

12Fashion a pure heart for me, O God; create in me a steadfast spirit.
13Do not cast me out of Your presence, or take Your holy spirit away from me.
14Let me again rejoice in Your help; let a vigorous spirit sustain me.

chatat one ***avon*** and two ***pesha-im***. He had referred to this already in Psalm 32.

Now, David discusses other sins committed both knowingly and unintentionally. He had not, however, been guilty of any other ***pesha-im***

Still, it sounds presumptuous of David to request that G'd should totally ignore all his other sins! The Talmud Baba Kama 50, teaches that G'd is not a ***vatran***, i.e. does not simply waive sins committed against Him. Besides, it appears that David views ***chata-im***, unintentionally committed sins as more serious than the ***avonot***, since he requests only that the ***chata-im*** be ignored whereas he wants the ***avonot*** to be blotted out completely!!

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai is quoted in the Zohar on Samuel II 12,13 "also the merciful G'd has removed your ***chatatcha***, – you will not die". This shows that the "prosecutor" created by commission of an ***avon*** is called ***chatat***. It is the "prosecutor", ***kateygor***, whom G'd has removed from his task. This is why David will not die.

Here too, David may have in mind such ***kategorim***, when he asks for G'd to ignore them, i.e. not to allow them the chance to accuse him before the heavenly tribunal. If that is so, all my serious sins, i.e. ***avonotay*** You can blot out, says David.

12. This request is hard to understand, since if G'd creates man, or David with a ***lev tahor***, a pure heart, how can G'd give him credit for proper conduct? – Possibly, all David asks for is that the predisposition to sin due to his ancestry mentioned in verse 7, – should be neutralized.

The reason he asks this ***li***, for me, i.e. not for others, is because he had been born especially handicapped in this way. Unless he had a pure heart, his ***ruach***, spirit would negatively influence his heart, actions, just as the pure soul which every person is equipped with is contaminated by man's actions. If ***ruach*** is identical with ***neshamah***, soul, David uses the expression ***chadash***, new, since, having come from heaven, a soul is relatively easy to cleanse. The heart however, being terrestrial in origin, is much harder to cleanse from sin. Therefore, David asks for ***bara***, a new creation.

יב לֵב טָהוֹר בְּרָא-לִי אֱלֹהִים וְרוּחַ נָכוֹן חַדֵּשׁ בְּקִרְבִּי:
יג אַל-תַּשְׁלִיכֵנִי מִלְּפָנֶיךָ וְרוּחַ קָדְשְׁךָ אַל-תִּקַּח מִמֶּנִּי:
יד הָשִׁיבָה לִּי שְׂשׂוֹן יִשְׁעֶךָ וְרוּחַ נְדִיבָה תִסְמְכֵנִי:

13. Here David explains why he had asked for *lev tahor*, and *ruach nachon*, a pure heart and a steadfast spirit in the previous verse. It is not likely that he was afraid that G'd would truly reject him. However, our sages have explained the difference between the righteousness of Abraham on the one hand and the righteousness of Noach.

Abraham had been told "make yourself walk in front of Me", i.e. G'd showed by this that Abraham's faith and virtue were the result of his being a "self starter". (Bereshit Rabbah 30,10) Noach, on the other hand, is described as "walking with G'd" (Genesis 6,9). It is as if G'd took him by the hand and was leading him. Also, the Torah, i.e. G'd needed to testify to Noach's righteousness (ibid.), whereas Abraham's righteousness was so self evident that it did not require the Torah to testify to it. His publicly performed acts of love and faith spoke for themselves, testify on his behalf.

David was afraid of being demoted to the level of Noach in G'd's relationship with him, whereas prior to his sin he had been similar to the patriarchs both in deed and in the degree of inspiration received from the holy spirit.

He asks that his erstwhile status be preserved. As long as he has a *lev tahor*, a pure heart, he can be like Abraham, a self starter. As long as he has a *ruach nachon*, a steadfast spirit, he can receive inspiration from the holy spirit, i.e. *ruach hakodesh*. We must not forget that David's soul had previously inhabited the bodies of the patriarchs. He wants to remain worthy of housing such a soul.

This may be why the Psalmist uses the usually feminine word *ruach* in a masculine form, i.e. *nachon* instead of *nechonah*. It is a reminder that it used to be Adam's and Abraham's, i.e. the spirit of the one who had been *nachon*, steadfast.

14. David asks for restoration of the joy he used to experience through having G'd grant him success in wars, i.e. *yishecha*, Your salvation. The book of Samuel II 11,1, links the episode of Bat Sheva directly with David's successful wars which enabled him to remain at home in Jerusalem. Having heard of Joab's successes in his battles against the Beney Ammon, and the siege of Rabbat Ammon their capital, gave David a heady feeling. This is always an invitation to the *yetzer hara*, evil urge to rear its head. A person is morally at his most

15 *I will teach transgressors Your ways, that sinners may return to You.*
16 *Save me from bloodguilt, O God, God, my deliverer, that I may sing forth Your beneficence.*
17 *O LORD, open my lips, and let my mouth declare Your praise.*
18 *You do not want me to bring sacrifices; You do not desire burnt offerings;*

vulnerable when he has reached a stage when he feels he can do no wrong.

Now when David asks G'd pardon for his sin, he asks that he will not forfeit the joy he used to experience due to G'd's salvation. He is afraid G'd might withhold further successes from him to help him avoid another sin due to the euphoric feelings resulting from victory over his enemies.

He is asking for *ruach nedivah*, a spirit of generosity. All David's wars (unless he had been attacked) had been due to economic necessity. He had always distributed the spoils of war amongst the people, not kept them for himself. (Berachot 3)

The merit of having secured his people's livelihood should be enough to fortify him against the *yetzer hara*.

15. If You G'd do for me this kindness, says David, I will teach the sinners not to abandon hope, that their repentance too would be accepted. My example will become their inspiration.

Beruriah, wife of Rabbi Meir, appreciated the chance the wicked have to repent when she reproved her husband who had prayed for the death of some wicked people who had kept harassing him. She told Rabbi Meir that Psalm 104,35, does not call for the end of the sinners, but for the end of the sins, i.e. *chata-im*, not *chot-im*. (Berachot 10) *Chata-im* refers to the categories of impurities created by the commission of sins, as we have explained on verse 11.

16. On the verse (Genesis 15,1) "do not be afraid Abraham, I am your shield", our sages have commented that Abraham was afraid of three things. He feared that amongst the people he or his men had killed in the war to free Lot, there could have been some innocent people, and he would have become guilty of bloodshed. G'd told him that his fears were unfounded.

The second fear of Abraham concerned the fact that relatives of the slain would make him the target of their revenge. He reasoned that he could not always count on G'd working miracles to save him. G'd reassured Abraham on that score also. His third fear was that by

טו אֲלַמְּדָה פֹשְׁעִים דְּרָכֶיךָ וְחַטָּאִים אֵלֶיךָ יָשׁוּבוּ׃
טז הַצִּילֵנִי מִדָּמִים אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי תְשׁוּעָתִי תְּרַנֵּן לְשׁוֹנִי
צִדְקָתֶךָ׃
יז אֲדֹנָי שְׂפָתַי תִּפְתָּח וּפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתֶךָ׃
יח כִּי לֹא־תַחְפֹּץ זֶבַח וְאֶתְּנָה עוֹלָה לֹא תִרְצֶה׃

the miracles shown to him by G'd in defeating the mightiest armies of the earth at that time, he had used up his accumulated merits. Here too, G'd gave him a reassuring reply.

G'd answered Abraham in three stages. "Don't be afraid", – I will protect you, – your reward is great indeed", i.e. you have not used it up. (Bereshit Rabbah 44,4)

Here David may have hinted at similar considerations when he said "save me from blood guilt", – in case I or my soldiers killed an innocent person. He appeals to *elokey teshu-ati*, that the G'd who is his personal Saviour would continue to be his protector against all attackers. Thirdly, *teranen leshoni tzidkatecha*, that You will do this for me even as an act of charity, something undeserved.

17. Perhaps David has in mind something similar to what occurred when Rabbi Chiyah and his sons got ready to pray for rain. (Baba Metzia 85) As soon as they said "He who makes the wind blow and the rain fall", though they had not started asking for anything yet, had only mentioned G'd's *gevurot*, mighty deeds, the rains already started falling. David asks for 2 favours. 1) teach me to say the right words. 2) may it suffice for me to proclaim Your praises.

18. Since the meat offering, even the finest, is of no value to You, and is of value to the person offering it only inasmuch as he becomes aware that what is happening to the animal should really be happening to him, David does not propose to shower G'd with such offerings. Leviticus 1,2, already phrases the whole legislation as "a person from you who wishes to offer himself as an offering to G'd etc." The Torah makes it plain that the animal is not the essential element in the offering.

The choice of *ve-etenah* instead of *matan zevach*, is indicative of the above. David says "as long as I give MYSELF to G'd, this is the important thing". More than that G'd does not require in order to forgive. (compare Jeremiah 7, 21–23) Even a total offering, *olah* all of which is burned on the altar, G'd does not ask for.

19 *True sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; God, You will*
not despise a contrite and crushed heart.
20 *May it please You to make Zion prosper; rebuild the*
walls of Jerusalem.
21 *Then You will want sacrifices offered in righteousness,*
burnt and whole offerings; then bulls will be offered on
Your altar.

52 *For the leader. A* maskil *of David,*
2 *when Doeg the Edomite came and informed Saul,*
telling him, "David came to Ahimelech's house."

19. Concerning the "meat offering", that can be offered to G'd WITHOUT a tangible sacrifice, i.e. animal being presented namely the *ruach nishabarah* the broken spirit, a spirit that has humbled itself by reflecting on what happens to the animal that is being offered. Such broken spirit, David is of course, ready to offer to G'd in the certainty that He will not despise it. If a broken spirit is not enough, David is prepared to offer also a contrite heart.

20. Since the contrite heart and broken spirit secure G'd's *ratzon* goodwill, the Psalmist asks that this should become manifest in Zion, and that as a result G'd Himself will build the walls of Jerusalem, another way of saying that the redemption should come because the Jewish people DESERVE it, possess the necessary merits. This is the meaning of "I shall be for you walls of fire around Jerusalem and glory inside it". (Zachariah 2,9)

21. This will put an end once and for all to the spirit of impurity, and there will then no longer be any need for broken spirits and contrite hearts.

At that time, G'd will welcome *zivchey tzedek*, meat offerings of righteousness. This is also what Isaiah has in mind when he says (Isaiah 51,3) "for the Lord has comforted Zion, He has comforted her waste places... joy and gladness shall be found in her, THANKSGIVING and the sound of melody". At that time there will no longer be bullocks that have to be burned OUTSIDE Jerusalem because they were offered in atonement for idolatrous conduct. (compare Leviticus 4,12) ALL bullocks will then be offered ON the altar, not because of any sins that have been committed.

יט זִבְחֵי אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ נִשְׁבָּרָה לֵב-נִשְׁבָּר וְנִדְכֶּה אֱלֹהִים
לֹא תִבְזֶה:
כ הֵיטִיבָה בִרְצוֹנְךָ אֶת-צִיּוֹן תִּבְנֶה חוֹמוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָ͏ִם:
כא אָז תַּחְפֹּץ זִבְחֵי-צֶדֶק עוֹלָה וְכָלִיל אָז יַעֲלוּ עַל-
מִזְבַּחֲךָ פָרִים:

נב

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ מַשְׂכִּיל לְדָוִד:
ב בְּבוֹא דוֹאֵג הָאֲדֹמִי וַיַּגֶּד לְשָׁאוּל וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בָּא-דָוִד
אֶל-בֵּית אֲחִימֶלֶךְ:

Psalm 52

2. The dual "he reported to Saul", and "he said to him" is strange. Why the use of two different terms for the same thing? Besides, why is there no predicate after "he told Saul"?

We must remember that Doeg had secluded himself in the tabernacle, as we read in Samuel I 21,8. Although Doeg could report all that had transpired between Achimelech and David, there was not a single incriminating act that Achimelech had committed, since he was totally unaware that David was in flight from Saul. On the contrary, David claimed to be on a secret mission on behalf of Saul, and had explained the absence of his usual entourage by that fact. (ibid.)

Besides, David had asked for bread like a beggar. Why would it be criminal for Achimelech to give him some bread?

Even if we consider that Doeg had reported to Saul that Achimelech had consulted G'd on behalf of David, (Samuel I 22,10) i.e. via the *urim vetumim*, his breastplate, since this was supposedly on behalf of a mission of the king, it was perfectly permissible for him to consult the *urim vetumim* on behalf of the king! He could therefore have obtained permission to give David the showbreads.

There had been no shred of evidence that Achimelech had become aware that David was trying to escape from Saul. How then could Saul conclude that Achimelech had been disloyal to him? Doeg might even have invented some of what he had reported as fact.

Probably, David here says about Doeg *vayaged*, he told Saul what he overheard in the tabernacle where he had hidden. Since this report was hardly evidence of intentional wrongdoing by Achimelech, Doeg

3*Why do you boast of your evil, brave fellow? God's faithfulness never ceases.*
4*Your tongue devises mischief, like a sharpened razor that works treacherously.*
5*You prefer evil to good, the lie, to speaking truthfully.* Selah.
6*You love all pernicious words, treacherous speech.*
7*So God will tear you down for good, will break you and pluck you from your tent, and root you out of the land of the living.* Selah.

added *vayomer*, that David had gone to the house of Achimelech, had not ONLY seen him in the tabernacle. He suggested that the only reason David had also gone to Achimelech's private residence, was to plot against Saul. Saul therefore concluded that whatever had been discussed by David and Achimelech inside the tabernacle, had been designed to fool anyone who would overhear the conversation, to convince them that theirs was an innocent association. At any rate, the most that Doeg had been able to report (as fact) was that David had met with Achimelech in the latter's house.

3. David questions Doeg about what he had hoped to achieve by such tendentious reporting. "Did you hope to boast about doing evil? Did you think this was an act of bravery? Even if it had been your intention to display concern for Saul, since the latter had complained that nobody shared his anguish (Samuel I 22,8) that his own son had collaborated with his servant (David), did you think that by making Saul angry at Achimelech, you were helping him? Did you carefully select the moment when your comments would cause Saul to explode in anger?" We have a tradition that G'd is angry only very briefly, every day, (Psalms 7,12 Talmud Berachot 7) and that it was Bileam's specialty to pick the precise moment G'd is angry and use it to make his curse effective at such a time. David tells Doeg that he had turned G'd's normally brief spell of anger, something referred to as *chessed*, kindness, because it is only momentary, into something that lasts *kol hayom* an entire day, and as a result of this a whole city of Priests had been killed by Saul.

4. You Doeg might argue that you had not had me in mind at all, but only Achimelech, whom you had considered guilty of death because he had made enquiries from G'd concerning me, i.e. enquiries about an individual, and that the *urim vetumim* are instruments to be activated only on behalf of a king. Your claim might be that your concern was only to uphold truth and justice.

ג מַה-תִּתְהַלֵּל בְּרָעָה הַגִּבּוֹר חֶסֶד אֵל כָּל-הַיּוֹם:
ד הַוּוֹת תַּחְשֹׁב לְשׁוֹנֶךָ כְּתַעַר מְלֻטָּשׁ עֹשֵׂה רְמִיָּה:
ה אָהַבְתָּ רָע מִטּוֹב שֶׁקֶר מִדַּבֵּר צֶדֶק סֶלָה:
ו אָהַבְתָּ כָל-דִּבְרֵי-בָלַע לְשׁוֹן מִרְמָה:
ז גַּם-אֵל יִתָּצְךָ לָנֶצַח יַחְתְּךָ וְיִסָּחֲךָ מֵאֹהֶל וְשֶׁרֶשְׁךָ
מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים סֶלָה:

This too is a lie, your tongue PLANS MISCHIEF. David describes two acts of mischief, one against himself and one against Achimelech. Against Achimelech "you were like a razor honed too much", i.e. to slaughter him instead of to shave him. Against me you used deceit aiming to incite Saul's wrath against me so that he would pursue me relentlessly.

5. I reject the argument that you told everything that had transpired out of genuine concern for truthfulness. You demonstrated a preference for evil over good. The good that you did not love is the *tov sheker*, the occasion when a lie is better than speaking righteously and truthfully. One may alter the truth sometimes in order to preserve harmony, peaceful relationships between people. (Yabamot 65. The angel misquoted Sarah in Genesis 18,13 for that reason).

There are occasions when the bald truth leads to world wide destruction, i.e. when one repeats and spreads "truthful" evil gossip, character assassination.

The speaking of truth *selah* i.e. always, under all circumstances is *ra*, evil, rather than *tov* good.

6. Not only that, but you have deliberately picked out the *pessolet* the worthless from the worthwhile, i.e. you have loved all "DEVOURING" words, deceitful tongue. David refers to Doeg saying "he consulted with G'd on his behalf, and also gave him the sword (of Goliath) and supplied him with provisions." (Samuel I 22,10)

He omitted to tell Saul of the conversation between David and Achimelech in which Achimelech had asked why David had arrived without attendants etc., and why he was carrying no arms and why he was so hungry. (Samuel I 21,2–5)

Achimelech is reported there as putting difficulties in the way of supplying David with bread, claiming that he had only loaves meant for sacred rituals, that could not be consumed by commoners. Doeg failed to tell Saul about any of this, telling him only carefully selected

[8]The righteous, seeing it, will be awestruck; they will jibe at him, saying,
[9]"Here was a fellow who did not make God his refuge, but trusted in his great wealth, relied upon his mischief."
[10]But I am like a thriving olive tree in God's house; I trust in the faithfulness of God forever and ever.
[11]I praise You forever, for You have acted; I declare that Your name is good in the presence of Your faithful ones.

parts of the "truth". All this proves that David was right when he accused him of ***lashon mirmah***, using his tongue deceitfully.

7. ***Eyl*** is the attribute of ***chessed***, loving kindness, something G'd falls back on when the person to be judged cannot point to any merits at all. David says ***gam eyl***, i.e. even the attribute of ***chessed*** cannot possibly find any excuse for you, much less the attribute of ***elokim***, justice or the attribute of ***hashem***, mercy. He will break you and expel you ***yitoatzcha***, from the tent, i.e. the house of Torah study.

(compare Numbers 19,14, where the word ***ohel*** is understood to mean the ***bet hamidrash***, house of study. Sanhedrin 106 reports that Doeg forgot all his previous Torah learning. He had been a leading scholar.)

Having become devoid of Torah knowledge, Doeg could be uprooted, i.e. ***ve-shershecha***, lose his share in the hereafter. He who has no ***eytz chayim*** (tree of life), i.e. Torah, loses his ***eretz hachayim***, his (land of life) hereafter.

To the question why David did not pray for mercy for Doeg, since we know G'd does not seek the death of the wicked but their repentance, and what ***chessed*** is achieved by Doeg's death?

8. The answer is that the positive result that would be achieved by Doeg losing his share in the hereafter is that other ***tzaddikim*** should observe what had happened and become afraid, and laugh at him. (Doeg) If G'd were to grant to people such as Doeg a chance to rehabilitate themselves, other ***tzaddikim*** might become guilty of similar sins in the hope that they too would be forgiven. By demonstrating that G'd does draw a line, – He is performing an act of ***chessed***, kindness for all the other ***tzaddikim***, righteous people.

9. The laughter that the ***tzaddikim*** watching the downfall of Doeg will break out in, consists of their exclaiming "here is what happens to a man who does not make the Lord his fortress, who instead, relies on his great wealth and who thinks that his strength derives from the

ח וְיִרְאוּ צַדִּיקִים וְיִירָאוּ וְעָלָיו יִשְׂחָקוּ׃
ט הִנֵּה הַגֶּבֶר לֹא־יָשִׂים אֱלֹהִים מָעוּזּוֹ וַיִּבְטַח בְּרֹב עָשְׁרוֹ יָעֹז בְּהַוָּתוֹ׃
י וַאֲנִי כְּזֵית רַעֲנָן בְּבֵית אֱלֹהִים בָּטַחְתִּי בְחֶסֶד אֱלֹהִים עוֹלָם וָעֶד׃
יא אוֹדְךָ לְעוֹלָם כִּי עָשִׂיתָ וַאֲקַוֶּה שִׁמְךָ כִּי־טוֹב נֶגֶד חֲסִידֶיךָ׃

evil he devises, from his scheming". His fate serves as a warning to all.

10. David answers those who ask why he uses Doeg's downfall as a warning to others instead of as a warning to himself. He explains that he himself does not need such a warning. He compares himself to an olive tree whose fruits are bitter but which is an evergreen. He has experienced so many afflictions personally, that he needs no further warnings.

He is a person planted in the house of G'd, i.e. in the region from which his soul originates, a region called ***beyt elokim***, house of G'd. He has no fear of "drying out" through sinful thoughts, having gladly suffered the ***chessed***, kindness of the attribute of justice which G'd displays when he subjects the righteous to ***yissurim shel ahavah***, trials demonstrating His love. He has already acquired his share in the hereafter through the way he has responded to these trials.

batachti bechessed elokim olam va-ed, He feels therefore assured of G'd's help also in this life. As the leaves of the olive tree do not wither either in summer of winter, so David does not worry either during "good" times or during "bad" times that he would waver in his faith through experiencing bitterness.

Or, simply, – David says that he did not ask for Doeg's collapse on his own account, but only so that his fate would serve as an example to others.

11. Although I have been the subject of many afflictions, says David, I thank You (***elokim***, attribute of justice) for having subjected me to them. I even invite, i.e. ***akaveh*** Your name ***Elokim*** to subject me to them in the future, because I know they are for my own good. However, my enemies should not misinterpret these afflictions as being punishments, rather ***neged chassidecha***, they should be evaluated as being in the presence of Your pious ones, those who know the positive values of ***yissurim***.

53 *For the leader; on* mahalath. *A* maskil *of David.*
2The benighted man thinks, "God does not care."
Man's wrongdoing is corrupt and loathsome; no one does good.
3The LORD looks down from heaven on mankind to find a man of understanding, a man mindful of God.
4Everyone is dross, altogether foul; there is none who does good, not even one.
5Are they so witless, those evildoers, who devour my people as they devour food, and do not invoke God?

Psalm 53

1. This hymn is a little different from Psalm 14. We have written there that the Psalmist discusses our present seemingly interminable exile, and that it commences in the form of a dialogue with the exile under the Medes, i.e. the period of Mordechai and Esther, Haman and Ahasverus. Psalm 14 is a continuation of Psalm 13 which discussed the 4 exiles separately.

Here, I believe, the Psalm picks up the theme of *lashon hara*, evil gossip, discussed in the previous Psalm in connection with Doeg. David had spoken out forcefully against Doeg and his innuendoes and against Saul who had accepted those innuendoes at face value, and killed the priests in Nov a city of priests, without cause. In this hymn David proves that Saul's action did NOT result in G'd despising him and his offspring, that on the contrary, from there we see that G'd remained close to him.

Esther, who one might have supposed, would be cast out by G'd for having married the gentile king Ahasverus, instead became the instrument of salvation for the Jewish nation. The meaning of *lamnatzeach lamachalat* is, "a hymn for the forgiveness G'd extended to Saul". *Mas-kil ledavid*, something that David understood through being inspired by the holy spirit.

The reason G'd forgave Saul was because the latter had been ashamed, and had accepted his own death and the death of his sons in good spirit, had in fact taken his sons with him to a battle which he knew he was going to lose and die in, as if he were leading them under the wedding canopy. (compare Berachot 12, and Yalkut Shimoni on Samuel I 28, item 141)

2. The *naval* referred to here is Haman. Our sages in Esther Rabbah 7,13 comment on Proverbs 30,22 that Haman told Ahasverus not to fear the G'd of Israel since He had become old and weak. Furthermore, he told the king that Israel had forfeited its claim to be

נג א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-מַחֲלַת מַשְׂכִּיל לְדָוִד:
ב אָמַר נָבָל בְּלִבּוֹ אֵין אֱלֹהִים הִשְׁחִיתוּ וְהִתְעִיבוּ עָוֶל
אֵין עֹשֵׂה-טוֹב:
ג אֱלֹהִים מִשָּׁמַיִם הִשְׁקִיף עַל-בְּנֵי-אָדָם לִרְאוֹת הֲיֵשׁ
מַשְׂכִּיל דֹּרֵשׁ אֶת-אֱלֹהִים:
ד כֻּלּוֹ סָג יַחְדָּו נֶאֱלָחוּ אֵין עֹשֵׂה-טוֹב אֵין גַּם אֶחָד:
ה הֲלֹא יָדְעוּ פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן אֹכְלֵי עַמִּי אָכְלוּ לֶחֶם אֱלֹהִים
לֹא קָרָאוּ:

helped by its G'd by having bowed to Haman's idol and by partaking of forbidden food at Ahasverus' banquet. (Yalkut Shimoni Esther item 1048 and 1057)

Despite the fact that Haman and Ahasverus had deliberately made Israel sin, this did not protect them. They had known the truth and been warned by Mordechai not to go to that banquet; since they had gone anyways, that had made them guilty. This is the meaning of *hish-chitu ve-hitivu avel.*

3. Because of the Jews' awareness, G'd had looked down on them with disfavour, (Rashi on Genesis 18,16) and had decided to let them suffer the threat of death by Haman, and to give them a chance to understand the reason for their predicament. This in order that they would take steps to rehabilitate themselves, do *teshuvah* and expiate for their sins.

Mordechai had only partially succeeded in doing so. This is what Moses had asked the prophet Elijah in a story related in Esther Rabbah 7,13, when he had been shown that generation and had enquired if there was an *ish*, a man capable of leading his people during that generation. Moses had said that both he and the prophet Elijah would pray for Israel at that time. This is why the book of Esther speaks about *u-mordechai yada*, AND Mordechai knew, i.e. not only he but Moses and Elijah." (Esther 4,1)

4–5. Also Esther's merit contributed to saving the Jews, since whatever Mordechai had done had not yet been fully effective, (the fasting and repenting) until the Jews had heard how Esther had behaved, i.e. that she had invited Haman the arch antisemite to have lunch with her and the king.

Rabbi Nechemyah (Megillah 15) explained that Esther invited Haman so that the Jews should not feel that since they had a Jewish queen at Court, they had adequate representation and need not fear.

[6]*There they will be seized with fright – never was there such a fright– for God has scattered the bones of your besiegers; you have put them to shame, for God has rejected them.*
[7]*O that the deliverance of Israel might come from Zion! When God restores the fortunes of His people, Jacob will exult, Israel will rejoice.*

54 *For the leader; with instrumental music. A* maskil *of David,* [2]*when the Ziphites came and told Saul, "Know, David is in hiding among us."*

Once the Jews saw that Esther appeared to be friendly with Haman, they realized that they had nothing to expect from that quarter, that G'd i.e. repentance was their only recourse if they wanted to escape Haman's decree.

Prior to that, ***eyn osseh tov***, no one had done good yet, and even the letters permitting the Jews to defend themselves would only have pitted two warring factions against each other. After all, the first letter had never been rescinded. (Esther 8,8)

The fact that the antisemites did not defend themselves, although they were entitled to do so legally, was the result of the nationwide repentance of the Jews inspired by both Mordechai, and primarily Esther's actions. The word ***ha-lo*** is to be understood as *im*, if. "If the sinners amongst Israel had not realized that ***ochley ammi*** the people I entertained were Haman and Ahasverus, the very ones who would consume my people" ***–elokim lo kara-u***, they would never have called upon G'd to save them, but would have relied on my diplomatic efforts as a Jewess.

6. It was the fear that gripped them when they heard that Esther entertained Haman, that saved them from the subsequent fear, i.e. the fear of impending death on the date mentioned in the first letter sent out by Haman. (Esther 3,14–15)

By the time that date arrived (13th of Adar), G'd had already scattered the bones of *chonach*=Haman who had been hanged 11 months earlier. What had happened to Haman had inspired fear amongst the local governors who helped only the Jews, though the original decree had remained in force. This is the meaning of "because they feared then, there was no fear". You G'd shamed them for having once believed that G'd despised them. (the Jewish people)

7. Someone might argue that all this happened after the 70 years

ה שָׁם פָּחֲדוּ פַחַד לֹא-הָיָה פָחַד כִּי-אֱלֹהִים פִּיזַר
עַצְמוֹת חֹנֶךָ הֱבִישֹׁתָה כִּי-אֱלֹהִים מְאָסָם:
ו מִי-יִתֵּן מִצִּיּוֹן יְשׁוּעוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשׁוּב אֱלֹהִים שְׁבוּת
עַמּוֹ יָגֵל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל:

נד א לַמְנַצֵּחַ בִּנְגִינֹת מַשְׂכִּיל לְדָוִד:
ב בְּבוֹא הַזִּיפִים וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְשָׁאוּל הֲלֹא-דָוִד מִסְתַּתֵּר
עִמָּנוּ:

of exile had expired, after the *Shechinah* had already returned to Zion, and that only a relatively minor assist by G'd had been needed, and that therefore the role of Mordechai and Esther was really quite negligible. The Psalmist refutes such an argument saying if this is "minor" in your eyes, it is "major" in MY eyes. I can only wish that when the time comes for the final redemption, that Israel should be brought to do *teshuvah* as in the days of Mordechai and Esther, and through such examples. If that will be the case, Israel can be spared the *chevley mashiach*, the painful birth pangs preceding redemption. They would be redeemed promptly, and return to Jerusalem without undergoing national convulsions. This then would be the difference between Psalm 14 and this Psalm. The choice of the term *elokim*, i.e. the attribute of justice – in this hymn, is deliberate. It demonstrates that even the attribute of justice did not challenge the redemption of Israel at that time through the efforts of Saul's descendants. If the *yeshuah* comes in such a manner, *yagel yaakov, yismach yisrael*, all sections of the Jewish people can enjoy EVEN the process of the redemption. (not merely the result of that process.)

Psalm 54

2. This verse explains why David needed many melodies, *neginot* to achieve the state of mind that enabled him to compose a hymn. The reason for his depressed state of mind was the knowledge that the Ziphim had revealed the whereabouts of his hideout to Saul. (Samuel I 23,19)

3. There is no greater trouble than to fall into the hands of people, i.e. creatures equipped with a free will. Now David finds himself between two such groups. The Ziphim are behind and Saul and his

3O God, deliver me by Your name; by Your power vindicate me.
4O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth.
5For strangers have risen against me, and ruthless men seek my life; they are unmindful of God. Selah.
6See, God is my helper; the LORD is my support.
7He will repay the evil of my watchful foes; by Your faithfulness, destroy them!
8Then I will offer You a freewill sacrifice; I will praise Your name, LORD,
9for it is good, for it has saved me from my foes, and let me gaze triumphant upon my enemies.

men in front. The Ziphim are anxious to capture him and hand him over to Saul. Our tradition tells us that a person's own merit does not suffice to be saved from such a situation as David found himself in at that time.

We have explained this in our commentary *chavatzelet hasharon* on the book of Daniel, as well as in our commentary on Proverbs. For this reason, David says that the only thing he can still hope for is that he will be saved for the sake of G'd's name. If he should be guilty of an offence deserving death, he asks G'd to judge him harshly, *bigvurotecha*, but it should be G'd directly who executes the judgement. The punishment should not be executed by human hands.

The word *tedineyni* refers to the one who executes the judgement for the sin committed, and not to the making of the decision, i.e. deciding on whether the party is guilty or innocent. (Genesis 15,14 as opposed to Genesis 6,3, "my spirit will not judge".)

Alternately, – David asks "save me from my pursuers for the sake of Your name. After that, judge me on my merits, i.e. even if the yardstick applied will be that of the attribute of justice.

4. Do not wait to take action until I have finished my prayer, *shema*, i.e. respond immediately. After that, *ha-azinah*, listen to my entire prayer. (similar to what we explained on Psalms 21,3)

5. The reason David asks not to be delivered into the hands of either of these groups of his pursuers is that neither group is truly G'd fearing. *aritzim*, are Saul's men, *zarim*, are the Ziphim. The latter do not try to kill me, only to hand me over to Saul, i.e. only *kamu*

ג אֱלֹהִים בִּשְׁמְךָ הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי וּבִגְבוּרָתְךָ תְדִינֵנִי׃
ד אֱלֹהִים שְׁמַע תְּפִלָּתִי הַאֲזִינָה לְאִמְרֵי-פִי׃
ה כִּי זָרִים קָמוּ-עָלַי וְעָרִיצִים בִּקְשׁוּ נַפְשִׁי לֹא שָׂמוּ
אֱלֹהִים לְנֶגְדָּם סֶלָה׃
ו הִנֵּה אֱלֹהִים עֹזֵר לִי אֲדֹנָי בְּסֹמְכֵי נַפְשִׁי׃
ז יָשִׁוב הָרַע לְשֹׁרְרָי בַּאֲמִתְּךָ הַצְמִיתֵם׃
ח בִּנְדָבָה אֶזְבְּחָה-לָּךְ אוֹדֶה שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה כִּי-טוֹב׃
ט כִּי מִכָּל-צָרָה הִצִּילָנִי וּבְאֹיְבַי רָאֲתָה עֵינִי׃

alay. The former ***bikshu nafshi***, want to kill me. Because their purpose is not godly, they would act without mercy.

Alternately, – the reason I pray that they not be given a chance to exercise their free will is that their efforts are really directed against G'd, i.e. ***lo samu elokim negdam***, not just against me.

6. This G'd whom they despise, will certainly come to my assistance. If only the harsh attribute of justice ***elokim*** would operate, they would be killed; but because ***adonay***, a milder form of the attribute of justice will operate since that attribute supports MY soul, they will not be killed, in order that I should not become the cause of their death and be punished for that.

7. As far as I am concerned let them merely experience themselves the evil, ***ra***, they have caused me; they need not die. But because they have denied Your ***amitcha***, truth, ***hatzmitem***, You may cut them off.

8. I have pleaded to repay them for the manner in which they have related to You, not because of how they have related to me. David now says that he had said so in a moment of anger, something he regrets now. Instead, David says, "I want to thank You for the good I have received with a generous heart, and I want to thank You, the attribute of mercy which has shown mercy to me, even though it shows mercy to all creatures. Inasmuch as You are ***tov***, good, I wish that You will have mercy on them.

9. I do so, since You have saved me from all my troubles thus far – without my having had to kill any of my enemies. On the contrary, I have been enabled to look them all in the face. This is what is called ***tov***, good (verse 8) for me, that I cannot be punished through having become the cause of my adversaries' deaths.

55 *For the leader; with instrumental music. A* maskil *of David.*

2Give ear, O God, to my prayer; do not ignore my plea;
3pay heed to me and answer me.
I am tossed about, complaining and moaning
4at the clamor of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked; for they bring evil upon me and furiously harass me.
5My heart is convulsed within me; terrors of death assail me.
6Fear and trembling invade me; I am clothed with horror.
7I said, "O that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and find rest;

Psalm 55

1. Because of his depressing experiences, and the resultant sadness, David requires musical instruments to help him attain a frame of mind when the *ruach hakodesh*, holy spirit could inspire him.

2. David announces that after having prayed, he would come back to the subject matter that bothers him, and begin to plead. He does not want G'd to say that since He had listened to His prayer already, there was no point in the *techinah*, supplication.

3. Neither does He want G'd to delay responding to his prayer until he has had a chance to pour out his supplication. He feels that his previous state of mind requires him to pour out his *techinah*, plea, even if he was worthy to have G'd respond to him already by merely hearing his *tefillah*, prayer. My *sichi*, conversation, is so full of agitation that I will groan, i.e. *o-himo* with supplication after the prayer.

4. Our sages and commentators all seem agreed that this hymn was composed while David was in flight from his sons Absalom (Midrash Tehillim 55). The *kol ya-akov* David refers to, is Shimi ben Geyra, who had cursed and shouted at David "go away, go away man of bloodshed". (Samuel II 16,7)

The *akat rasha* "trouble of the wicked", refers to Achitofel and his counsel to Absalom to sleep with some of his father's concubines. (Samuel II 16,21) (This had been in order to convince the people that a reconciliation between David and Absalom was out of the question and their supporting Absalom could not backfire politically)

David says that the common denominator between Achitofel and Shimi was that both accuse me of the kind of sin that makes my

נה א לַמְנַצֵּחַ בִּנְגִינֹת מַשְׂכִּיל לְדָוִד:
ב הַאֲזִינָה אֱלֹהִים תְּפִלָּתִי וְאַל-תִּתְעַלַּם מִתְּחִנָּתִי:
ג הַקְשִׁיבָה לִי וַעֲנֵנִי אָרִיד בְּשִׂיחִי וְאָהִימָה:
ד מִקּוֹל אוֹיֵב מִפְּנֵי עָקַת רָשָׁע כִּי-יָמִיטוּ עָלַי אָוֶן וּבְאַף יִשְׂטְמוּנִי:
ה לִבִּי יָחִיל בְּקִרְבִּי וְאֵימוֹת מָוֶת נָפְלוּ עָלָי:
ו יִרְאָה וָרַעַד יָבֹא בִי וַתְּכַסֵּנִי פַּלָּצוּת:
ז וָאֹמַר מִי-יִתֶּן-לִי אֵבֶר כַּיּוֹנָה אָעוּפָה וְאֶשְׁכֹּנָה:

present predicament appear like heavenly retribution for those sins. If David were to confront Absalom with the question "who permitted you to sleep with my concubines?" Absalom would retort "who permitted you to sleep with Bat Sheva?" It would appear that what had happened to him was merely *midah keneged midah*, punishment that fits the nature of the crime. He would point to Samuel II 12,11 to Nathan's prediction "G'd will make evil arise from your own house, I will take your wives before your very eyes, give them to your companion, and he will sleep with your wives in public" (i.e. it will become common knowledge)

Absalom would describe himself as fulfilling this prophecy. David's having sinned secretly, would be punished by his being shamed publicly in this fashion.

Also Shimi accused David of experiencing fitting retribution for having been responsible for the death of 7 of Saul's surviving offspring. (Samuel II 21,6–9) David wishes that the hatred and anger directed at him will suffice to diminish his remaining guilt so that he would not have to die, as indicated in Samuel II 12,14.

5. David is afraid that he may still face death for having had Uriah killed, something that could not have been atoned for till he himself died. (since it was murder)

Also, Achitofel's advice to kill me frightens me, though I have been assured I would not die.

6. Therefore, I am afraid to kill (*yirah*) and I am afraid to be killed (*ra-ad*).

The fear starts inside and spreads outwards to the skin, i.e. *vatechasseni palatzut*, I am covered in shudders.

7. This has affected me so much that I wish in my heart to be equipped with wings so that I could fly away etc. The vowel *patach*

[8]*surely, I would flee far off; I would lodge in the wilderness;* Selah
[9]*I would soon find me a refuge from the sweeping wind, from the tempest."*
[10]*O LORD, confound their speech, confuse it!*
For I see lawlessness and strife in the city;
[11]*day and night they make their rounds on its walls; evil and mischief are inside it.*
[12]*Malice is within it; fraud and deceit never leave its square.*
[13]*It is not an enemy who reviles me – I could bear that; it is not my foe who vaunts himself against me –I could hide from him;*
[14]*but it is you, my equal, my companion, my friend;*

under the word *ka-yonah* is peculiar, since we would have expected a *shevah*, semi vowel, seeing no previously mentioned dove is referred to.

If someone, under great stress, says, "I wish I would die, and then I would be rid of my troubles", he does not speak wisely, since even if G'd were to grant his wish, he does not know what problems he would face after death. The exception would be someone like Rabbi Yoshua ben Levi (Ketuvot 77) who knew where he would go immediately after death.

If a man of the stature of Rabbi Yoshua ben Levi had said – while fleeing – "I wish that I could proceed to my place in the hereafter with my body and soul, and enjoy respite there", would he be considered as talking nonsense? Similarly, David seems to make such a statement here, by referring to the well known dove which had flown from Noah's ark at Noah's behest and returned with an olive branch snatched from *gan eden*. (Genesis 8,11 see Ramban) David says he would NOT do like the dove, (i.e. return to the ark) but he would fly to *gan eden* and stay there! *ve-eshkonah*!

8. The reason David is so despondent is that even by staying in the desert far from the capital Jerusalem his problems do not resolve themselves. He has to return to Jerusalem where he will face his problems again!

9. He is NOT interested in finding a temporary refuge from the stormy winds.

10. Even if I do not ask for my enemies to die, at least swallow them like Korach was swallowed, or at least their tongues so that the whole nation can see and learn a lesson from what happens to them.

ח הִנֵּה אַרְחִיק נְדֹד אָלִין בַּמִּדְבָּר סֶלָה:
ט אָחִישָׁה מִפְּלָט לִי מֵרוּחַ סוֹעָה מִסָּעַר:
י בַּלַּע אֲדֹנָי פַּלַּג לְשׁוֹנָם כִּי-רָאִיתִי חָמָס וְרִיב בָּעִיר:
יא יוֹמָם וָלַיְלָה יְסוֹבְבֻהָ עַל-חוֹמֹתֶיהָ וְאָוֶן וְעָמָל בְּקִרְבָּהּ:
יב הַוּוֹת בְּקִרְבָּהּ וְלֹא-יָמִישׁ מֵרְחֹבָהּ תֹּךְ וּמִרְמָה:
יג כִּי לֹא-אוֹיֵב יְחָרְפֵנִי וְאֶשָּׂא לֹא-מְשַׂנְאִי עָלַי הִגְדִּיל וְאֶסָּתֵר מִמֶּנּוּ:
יד וְאַתָּה אֱנוֹשׁ כְּעֶרְכִּי אַלּוּפִי וּמְיֻדָּעִי:

I have seen already as much violence as used to be commonplace in the period preceding the deluge, and as much strife as occurred during the rebellion by Korach.

11. There is no other way of solving this, since they (the wicked enemies) walk around Jerusalem's walls day and night, to prevent anyone entering and destroying from the outside, while all the time the wickedness i.e. *aven ve-amal* which threatens to destroy it, is inside.

12. Since the evil designs are inside the city and do not move from its streets, i.e. deceit remains in public view, they are jeopardizing everyone inside it. Since they accuse their king of being wicked, how would the king be able to admonish them? The only thing that can have a sobering effect on the rest of the nation is if the rebellious inhabitants of Jerusalem will be disciplined by G'd for all to see.

13. Achitofel could counter "why are you so angry at me, though I am a relative of Bat Sheva and a good friend of yours, whereas Shimi ben Geyra who cursed you – you did not allow to be harmed, and Saul who persecuted you, you did not retaliate against when you had the chance?!" David therefore quasi explains that a person does not get so angry when a known enemy attacks him. The needle prick by someone considered a friend, hurts more than being hit by the sword of an enemy. Shimi DESERVED that I would tolerate his insult. Also Saul, I knew had made his hatred plain, therefore I could hide myself from him.

14. But you were a person who though you did not deserve the appellation *ish*, or even *adam*, but merely *enosh*, were treated by me

15*sweet was our fellowship; we walked together in God's house.*
16*Let Him incite death against them; may they go down alive into* Sheol*!*
For where they dwell, there evil is.
17*As for me, I call to God; the LORD will deliver me.*
18*Evening, morning, and noon, I complain and moan, and He hears my voice.*
19*He redeems me unharmed from the battle against me; it is as though many are on my side.*
20*God who has reigned from the first, who will have no successor, hears and humbles those who have no fear of God.* Selah.

as if ***erki***, you were my equal. Not only that, I even made you my guide and confidant!

15. We would jointly discuss the most profound aspects of Torah, and we used to taste the sweet taste of such studies. Though you were not superior to me in insights, I used to give you precedence in the house of G'd, though there is a separate entrance for the king who does not use the entrance for the common people, you walked by my side. (Ezekiel 44,3, – Maimonides on that)

David, in his capacity as president of the Supreme Court was always accompanied by people who walked BEHIND him. Achitofel by rights, should have walked behind David with the people. Still, David showed him special preference. Achitofel had now displayed ingratitude of the worst kind by defecting to Absalom and advising him how best to defeat David, based on his former intimacy with him.

16. If my suggestion in verse 10 cannot be fulfilled, says David to G'd, that they cannot descend to their grave alive, let them live a long life, experience purgatory while on earth, i.e. afflictions, so that when they die, eventually, they will have atoned for their sins. (*Yashi*, i.e. it shall overhang them like a creditor)

David wants the afflictions his detractors shall suffer to draw attention to the evil in the hearts of those people who had not been publicly known, i.e. ***ki ra-ot bimguram bekirbam***, the evil that had only been inside of them will then be revealed.

17. Should you say that I (David) will be better off if they die, – since otherwise they will continue to harass me, David says that he does not worry about that since G'd will help him as soon as he calls on Him.

טו אֲשֶׁר יַחְדָּו נַמְתִּיק סוֹד בְּבֵית אֱלֹהִים נְהַלֵּךְ בְּרָגֶשׁ:
טז יַשִּׁימָוֶת עָלֵימוֹ יֵרְדוּ שְׁאוֹל חַיִּים כִּי-רָעוֹת בִּמְגוּרָם בְּקִרְבָּם:
יז אֲנִי אֶל-אֱלֹהִים אֶקְרָא וַיהוָה יוֹשִׁיעֵנִי:
יח עֶרֶב וָבֹקֶר וְצָהֳרַיִם אָשִׂיחָה וְאֶהֱמֶה וַיִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי:
יט פָּדָה בְשָׁלוֹם נַפְשִׁי מִקְּרָב-לִי כִּי-בְרַבִּים הָיוּ עִמָּדִי:
כ יִשְׁמַע אֵל וַיְעַנֵּם וְיֹשֵׁב קֶדֶם סֶלָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין חֲלִיפוֹת לָמוֹ וְלֹא יָרְאוּ אֱלֹהִים:

18. The Talmud in Rosh Hashanah 35, explaining Isaiah 65,24 "before they call I will answer, while they are still speaking I will listen", teaches that a person must edit his prayers before uttering them. When G'd is favorably disposed towards the supplicant, He responds even before the supplicant has uttered his prayer, as soon as the prayers are being edited. (formulated) Since a person does not know beforehand what he is going to say, the only way G'd could respond already is if the supplicant had first edited the prayer he was going to utter. By having a fixed liturgy, we enable G'd to respond before we even utter the prayer. This is what is meant by David here. We have a fixed liturgy for our morning, noon and evening prayers.

David uses the future tense, i.e. ***asichah***, I will speak, since he refers to G'd responding ***vayishma koli***, He has already heard my voice. This means that G'd responded before David had uttered the words prescribed by our liturgy. ***ve-ehemah***, is the eventual emotional silent prayer, as distinct from ***koli***, my voice, the time I uttered the words that would constitute the framework of my prayers.

19. He redeemed me, (saved my life) by making me pay in terms of ***shalom***, peace of mind. Robbing me of my peace of mind, was G'd's way of saving my life. He spared me ACTUAL battle against my enemies. Had G'd NOT heard my voice before I had uttered my prayer, how could one account for the fact that the enemy never came close enough to engage me in battle?

Another aspect, – G'd set my rescue in motion even before my troubles had actually begun; i.e. when I was still at peace, He redeemed my soul. Therefore, G'd had set redemption in motion before I would have occasion to call on Him!

20. Other people, even ***tzaddikim***, experience G'd's help only after G'd has HEARD; then – He answers them. This is the meaning of

21*He harmed his ally, he broke his pact;*
22*his talk was smoother than butter, yet his mind was on war; his words were more soothing than oil, yet they were drawn swords.*
23*Cast your burden on the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous man collapse.*
24*For You, O God, will bring them down to the nethermost Pit– those murderous, treacherous men; they shall not live out half their days; but I trust in You.*

56 *For the leader; on* jonath elem rehokim. *Of David. A* michtam*; when the Philistines seized him in Gath.*

berabim hayu immadi, the many good people who were with me.

When David was in flight from Absalom, he had three principal enemies. They were Doeg, Achitofel and Shimi. David says, when I asked in verse 10 "swallow them and divide their tongues", I referred only to those who would not produce viable alternatives for themselves, i.e. children who would grow up as *tzaddikim* or who would beget such. Such offspring could redeem their progenitors by their good deeds, make up for the sins of their forefathers.

If they would not be able to do this, and at the same time *lo yaru elokim*, had no respect for G'd, THEN I asked "swallow them etc."

But when someone would become the ancestor of such outstanding *tzaddikim* as Mordechai and Esther, saviours of the Jewish people, I did not want to preclude this from happening on account of my request in verse 10. Rather, I want such a person to live in the meantime, as I have said in verse 16. I did not kill Shimi because he would become the ancestor of Mordechai and Esther. (Esther 2,5)

The others, because *veyoshev kedem selah*, they would remain stationary forever, would not produce something worthwhile, – are subject to my prayer in verse 10. Shimi lived until he had fathered a son who would be the forbear of Mordechai. (source not named)

21. Should someone ask why David waited for further issue of Shimi, instead of crediting him with having repented, since he had been the first of the "house of Joseph" to welcome David back after the death of Absalom, (Samuel II 19,21) the answer is twofold.

A king must not waive, forgive insult to his honour. (Ketuvot 17) All he could do was to suspend the sentence of Shimi until Solomon

כא שָׁלַח יָדָיו בִּשְׁלֹמָיו חִלֵּל בְּרִיתוֹ׃
כב חָלְקוּ מַחֲמָאת פִּיו וְקֶרֶב-לִבּוֹ רַכּוּ דְבָרָיו מִשֶּׁמֶן
וְהֵמָּה פְּתִחוֹת׃
כג הַשְׁלֵךְ עַל-יְהוָה יְהָבֶךָ וְהוּא יְכַלְכְּלֶךָּ לֹא-יִתֵּן
לְעוֹלָם מוֹט לַצַּדִּיק׃
כד וְאַתָּה אֱלֹהִים תּוֹרְדֵם לִבְאֵר שַׁחַת אַנְשֵׁי דָמִים
וּמִרְמָה לֹא-יֶחֱצוּ יְמֵיהֶם וַאֲנִי אֶבְטַח-בָּךְ׃

נו א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-יוֹנַת אֵלֶם רְחֹקִים לְדָוִד מִכְתָּם בְּאֶחֹז
אוֹתוֹ פְּלִשְׁתִּים בְּגַת׃

took over the kingdom. This is why he had asked Solomon on his deathbed not to let Shimi die from natural causes. (Kings I 2,9) When David says *shalach yadav*, he put forth his hand, he means that while there had been peaceful relations between him and Shimi, the latter became disloyal. Shimi had even been Solomon's tutor (Berachot 8, indirectly) *chillel berito*, he desecrated, shattered his own covenant.

22. Even when he had offered apologies, he did not do so wholeheartedly, he offered flattery from his lips outwards, *machmaot piv*, *ukrav libbo*, but the inside of his heart was still at war.

23. What did his flattery consist of? While he had originally accused David of being *ish damim*, a man of bloodshed, after he had been saved, he told him "as long as you entrust yourself to G'd, He will provide for you, He will never let the *tzaddik* falter."

24. To the argument that David himself had asked that Shimi and his like should not die, but should experience purgatory on earth (verse 16) and that how could David now predict that they should die? (*toridem* instead of *horidem*) David answers: I know that You G'd will not allow them to experience their purgatory here on earth, but You will throw them into the well of destruction to be judged; You will not grant them much more time on earth.

Because they are men of blood and deceit, they will not live out more than half their allocated life span. (the life span allotted to them prior to birth)

On the other hand, I, to whom You had not allotted any life span at all, since I was meant to be stillborn, (compare Psalm 2 and our commentary on verse 7) I am certain that You will grant me my life

[2]Have mercy on me, O God, for men persecute me; all day long my adversary oppresses me.
[3]My watchful foes persecute me all day long; many are my adversaries, O Exalted One.
[4]When I am afraid, I trust in You,
[5]in God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can mortals do to me?
[6]All day long they cause me grief in my affairs, they plan only evil against me.

span, i.e. the unexpired portion of Adam etc. (compare Psalm 16,1 and our commentary there)

Psalm 56

1. The cause of David composing at a time when the Philistines had control of him at Gat, – is that he congratulated himself on not questioning G'd's ways. Since the prophet Samuel had anointed him king, he had now lost, i.e. become distant from two of his former sources of support. 1) He had lost the support of Saul, his father-in-law;. He also seemed to have lost G'd's support who, by allowing him to masquerade as an insane fool at the court of Achish king of Gat in order to save his life, had surely shown Himself as being distant.

David is not only like a silent dove, not complaining, but even composed a poem, *michtam*.

G'd considers such conduct as a "crown" for David, a singular distinction. Those whom G'd loves, He subjects to harsh rebukes. (Proverbs 3,12)

How could David speak about "two that are distant"? It is because when he fled because he was afraid of Saul, he fell into the hands of the Philistines instead, and these had designs to kill him.

2. David then asked G'd for "favour", *cheyn*, seeing he could not offer any merits on his own behalf that would be presented for him at the heavenly Court. "Here a human being = *enosh* (Saul) was straining every day to oppress me and to make war against me; even when I am almost destroyed by him, it is not too bad, since at least since he is G'd fearing, ONLY one individual battles me, he does not attempt to kill me but actually spoke to my heart. (Samuel I 24,16–22)

3. But now many fight against me, my enemies are striving against me daily. This is not like Saul, who was actually ready to kill me only during brief moments, though the rest of the time he pursued me. I must conclude that my present situation is due to the fact that many

ג חָנֵּנִי אֱלֹהִים כִּי-שְׁאָפַנִי אֱנוֹשׁ כָּל-הַיּוֹם לוֹחֵם
יְלָחֲצֵנִי׃
ג שָׁאֲפוּ שׁוֹרְרַי כָּל-הַיּוֹם כִּי-רַבִּים לוֹחֲמִים לִי מָרוֹם׃
ד יוֹם אִירָא אֲנִי אֵלֶיךָ אֶבְטָח׃
ה בֵּאלֹהִים אֲהַלֵּל דְּבָרוֹ בֵּאלֹהִים בָּטַחְתִּי לֹא אִירָא מַה
-יַּעֲשֶׂה בָשָׂר לִי׃
ו כָּל-הַיּוֹם דְּבָרַי יְעַצֵּבוּ עָלַי כָּל-מַחְשְׁבֹתָם לָרָע׃

fight against me *marom*, in the celestial regions. No one would dare to lift a finger against me here on earth, had it not been so decreed on high. (compare Chullim 7, based on Psalms 37,23) This causes me to fear that I am experiencing a period of ***hastarat panim***, a withdrawal of Divine favour, i.e. that I am in a spiritual blackout.

4. The preposition ***elecha*** in connection with ***evtach*** is strange. We usually have ***be-cha*** or ***alecha*** as the preposition for "I trust in You". Why the change in this instance?

David emphasizes that his present troubles are unlike any he has ever experienced before. Other people, whose principal concerns are worldly matters, may experience fear, but I, whose constant orientation has been ***elecha*** to You, have always been full of confidence.

Now, *yom ira*, I find myself afraid by day.

5. But, even if I am being subjected to ***elokim***, i.e. the attribute of justice, in other words ACTUALLY, not merely something that exists only in my fears, – nonetheless I accept His verdict with praise, i.e. *ahallel devaro*. The same G'd who had promised me "your hand will be on the neck of your enemies", (Genesis 49,8, which according to Bereshit Rabbah 98,6 is a blessing referring to David) is the one in whose promises I believe. While I believe in the promise made by G'd through Jacob His choice patriarch, what can someone who is mere *bassar*, flesh do to me?

6. What bothers me, David says, is that previously I used to utter words of Torah, whereas now, that I am forced to play the role of the demented fool at King Achish's Court, I utter only nonsense. (Samuel 21,14)

I cannot spend my time praising the Lord, else these people who are mere flesh may kill me, something they are planning to do constantly if they find an excuse to harm me, i.e. *kol machshevotam lara*.

[7]They plot, they lie in ambush; they watch my every move, hoping for my death.
[8]Cast them out for their evil; subdue peoples in Your anger, O God.
[9]You keep count of my wanderings; put my tears into Your flask, into Your record.
[10]Then my enemies will retreat when I call on You; this I know, that God is for me.
[11]In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise,

7. That is why they gather together, looking and waiting for a chance that after an hour or two of playing the fool, I might revert to my true self. This is what they are hoping for. They cling to me like to a person who is about to die, whose soul is about to depart.

8. Do not punish them for their present sin against me; let them escape until they will be judged together with all the other nations who will receive their retribution in due course. Then, *hored elokim* cast down those people o G'd, together with all the other nations.

9. We have a tradition (Shabbat 105) that G'd counts the tears shed by a person through anguish caused him by others. He stores those tears in His treasure chambers. Without enlarging on this tradition at this point, no doubt the reason G'd preserves these tears is to indicate that He considers them precious.

Our sages explain that when G'd counts Israel, it is a sign of His love for them. (Rashi Numbers 1,1)

If counting people is a sign of their worth, so is counting their tears. Storing Israel's merits acquired in this world, is to enable them to arrive in the hereafter with their merits intact.

David explains WHY he does not want the injustice, *aven* done to him by the Philistines to be avenged now. He, who had emptied his head of tears, wants them to be stored by G'd for future benefit. If G'd were to punish the Philistines now, David's store of tears would become depleted. David describes G'd's treasure chamber as *nodcha*, Your skin bottle.

Nodi are my tears that have emptied my head of its water supply".

"You have counted them". This is similar to what our sages in Midrash Tanchumah explain on Exodus 33,19 "that G'd showed Moses a variety of treasure chests. When Moses asked what the largest of the treasure chests was for, G'd explained that from that chest he would take in order to grant of His goodness to those who

ז יָגוּרוּ יִצְפִּינוּ הֵמָּה עֲקֵבַי יִשְׁמֹרוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר קִוּוּ נַפְשִׁי׃
ח עַל-אָוֶן פַּלֵּט-לָמוֹ בְּאַף עַמִּים הוֹרֵד אֱלֹהִים׃
ט נֹדִי סָפַרְתָּה אָתָּה שִׂימָה דִמְעָתִי בְנֹאדֶךָ הֲלֹא
בְסִפְרָתֶךָ׃
י אָז יָשׁוּבוּ אוֹיְבַי אָחוֹר בְּיוֹם אֶקְרָא זֶה-יָדַעְתִּי כִּי-
אֱלֹהִים לִי׃
יא בֵּאלֹהִים אַהֲלֵל דָּבָר בַּיהוָה אֲהַלֵּל דָּבָר׃

had no merits of their own". This is what David refers to here when he speaks about his tears, stored *besifrotecha*, in Your counting.

10. Since it is possible to argue that Jacob's blessing to Yehudah in Genesis 49,8, refers to someone other than David, David says "I will make a simple experiment". Since even after escaping from Achish king of Gat, Saul and his men are still pursuing me, I will address Saul as "my lord the king" when I meet with him. (Samuel I 24,9) If Saul will then stop pursuing me and trying to kill me, this will be a sign for me that the kingdom will indeed become mine, and that G'd will remain on my side.

This is what David refers to in our verse, when he says "then my enemies will turn around, on the day I call; through this I will know that G'd is with me".

This will assure me that the nations will also turn their back to me *oreph*, that they will flee and I will strike them from behind, not in a face to face encounter. The verse in Genesis will then be fulfilled in its literal sense. Perhaps the words of Jacob in the same blessing "your brothers will thank you, acknowledge you", is a hint of what Saul said to David in Samuel I 24,17–22 as well as in Samuel I 26,21 and 25.

11. We have explained in the Mishnah in Avot 4,9 "he who fulfils the Torah while in a state of poverty, will eventually fulfil its laws when wealthy", to mean that it is good for a person to be disciplined by G'd through afflictions such as poverty, since having learned how to cope with such afflictions, he will be able to cope with the challenges posed by material wealth if and when G'd grants him riches.

A person who has undergone afflictions is more likely to remain humble. On the other hand, if someone was in the habit of ignoring Torah laws while wealthy, believing that he can rely on his wealth to solve any possible problems, even becoming impoverished is not likely

12 *in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can man do to me?*
13 *I must pay my vows to You, O God; I will render thank offerings to You.*
14 *For You have saved me from death, my foot from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.*

57 *For the leader; al* tashheth. *Of David. a* michtam; *when he fled from Saul into a cave.*

to humble him in such a way that he will start to observe Torah laws. The reason is that the debauchery he has practiced while wealthy does not permit him to realize how foolish he had been. He will yearn for such times again.

Therefore, it is better for a person who is destined for high office, to first undergo a series of afflictions, so that when he does attain that office he will continue to observe the Torah. David says, that although clearly *hashem* the attribute of mercy wanted to crown me king, He brought *yissurim*, afflictions on me, i.e. the *midat elokim*. If I would praise Him in SUCH circumstances, the chances were that I would praise Him while benefiting from His display of goodness and mercy. I would not then become corrupted through good fortune.

12. I said earlier that I trusted in *elokim*, that since Achish is only *bassar* flesh, he is not spiritually significant, seeing that he is a gentile and does not qualify for the title *adam*. (Yevamot 61)

I now say "since G'd spoke well about me" (in Jacob's blessing), that Yehudah is a young lion, i.e. that I will become king and that just as I have experienced afflictions, I will experience successes glory etc.

If someone were to consider my statement premature, since I have not yet become king etc., my reply is that I am certain that G'd will save me also from Saul, i.e. *ma ya-aseh li adam*, even an *adam*, i.e. Saul will not be able to harm me. Just as G'd saved me from Achish because I had absolute faith in Him, so He will save me from Saul because I have absolute faith in Him.

13. I am quite certain that "Your vows", i.e. the promises about my future expressed in Jacob's blessings to Yehudah referred to me, i.e. *alay*. I will have to repay two thanksgiving offerings. One for the promise made concerning my future, and the other for Your having saved me from the Philistines.

יב בֵּאלֹהִים בָּטָחְתִּי לֹא אִירָא מַה-יַּעֲשֶׂה אָדָם לִי:
יג עָלַי אֱלֹהִים נְדָרֶיךָ אֲשַׁלֵּם תּוֹדוֹת לָךְ:
יד כִּי הִצַּלְתָּ נַפְשִׁי מִמָּוֶת הֲלֹא רַגְלַי מִדֶּחִי לְהִתְהַלֵּךְ
לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים בְּאוֹר הַחַיִּים:

נז א לַמְנַצֵּחַ אַל-תַּשְׁחֵת לְדָוִד מִכְתָּם בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי-שָׁאוּל
בַּמְּעָרָה:

14. Especially, that You have saved my soul from death, i.e. that I never actually had to engage in battle with my enemies. In this way I was saved from death as well as my enemies. This gives me confidence that You will save my foot from stumbling, so that I will be able to walk unaided before the Lord.

Devarim Rabbah 11,5, brings the following comment on our verse. Moses' soul did not really want to depart from his body, (in order to protect him), so Moses conversed with her. He explained that the angel of death was going to claim her in that case. The soul replied that this could not be so, since G'd had promised "You have rescued my soul from death" (Psalms 116 and here).

When Moses warned the soul that purgatory might claim her (if she stayed within his body), she answered *ve-et ragli midechi*, i.e. I will not wind up in purgatory, since I have an assurance from this verse. (Eventually Moses convinced the soul it was safe to depart)

We have explained on Zohar 3,220, on Psalm 16,10, that on the way to *gan eden*, a person's remains pass in proximity to the portals of the *gehinam*, purgatory. In the case of the *tzaddikim*, this is so that they can rescue some souls whose term in that place is close to coming to an end.

The meaning of our verse here seems to be this: just as G'd has found a way for me to escape my detractors and save my soul, so He will also save my foot from slipping into purgatory on my way past there after my physical death. He will simply not let me pass close by. Instead, I will walk before G'd in bright light, not in the darkness surrounding purgatory.

Psalm 57

1. The Psalmist should have said "when David fled INTO the cave on account of Saul", not "inside the cave". On the contrary, Saul

[2]*Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for I seek refuge in You, I seek refuge in the shadow of Your wings, until danger passes.*
[3]*I call to God Most High, to God who is good to me.*
[4]*He will reach down from heaven and deliver me: God will send down His steadfast love; my persecutor reviles.* Selah.
[5]*As for me, I lie down among man-eating lions whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongue is a sharp sword.*

wound up being at David's mercy and all alone. (Samuel I 24) In fact, Saul, had acknowledged David's generosity in not having harmed him. (Samuel I, 24, verse 16–21.)

The fact is that David composed this hymn in order to give thanks to G'd who had guided him and had not let him kill Saul. G'd had so to speak said to him *al tash-chet*, do not destroy the one anointed by G'd. The fact that David had been able to restrain himself, had made him as if he had been fleeing from Saul instead of the other way around.

Not only that, if David had indeed killed Saul and this would have been considered sinful, he would have brought great guilt upon himself. In that respect David therefore could be viewed as fleeing Saul.

2. David asks G'd twice to grant him favour, once so that he could resist the opportunity and impulse to kill Saul and sin. The second time he asks favour so that when the time came when he would eventually have to leave the cave and Saul's men would be in a position to harm him, that this should not occur. Were that to happen, his having let Saul escape would turn out to be not only futile but counterproductive. This is why David repeats *choneyni*, grant me favour, i.e. in Saul's eyes, so that he will not kill me. G'd did indeed grant David's request as is evident from the closing verses of that chapter. In fact, a reconciliation was achieved.

The reason the name *elokim* is interposed between the first *choneyni* and the second *choneyni*, is that in the first *choneyni* David asked to find favour in the eyes of G'd, whereas in the second *choneyni*, he asked to find favour in the eyes of Saul.

The first *choneyni* is that David pleads that since he had displayed total faith in G'd, – G'd should help him not to kill Saul and burden his soul with that sin. The second, his plea to find favour in Saul's eyes so that the latter will not kill him, David justifies by saying *betzel*

ב חָנֵּנִי אֱלֹהִים חָנֵּנִי כִּי בְךָ חָסָיָה נַפְשִׁי וּבְצֵל-כְּנָפֶיךָ
אֶחֱסֶה עַד-יַעֲבוֹר הַוּוֹת:
ג אֶקְרָא לֵאלֹהִים עֶלְיוֹן לָאֵל גֹּמֵר עָלָי:
ד יִשְׁלַח מִשָּׁמַיִם וְיוֹשִׁיעֵנִי חֵרֵף שֹׁאֲפִי סֶלָה יִשְׁלַח
אֱלֹהִים חַסְדּוֹ וַאֲמִתּוֹ:
ה נַפְשִׁי בְּתוֹךְ לְבָאִם אֶשְׁכְּבָה לֹהֲטִים בְּנֵי-אָדָם שִׁנֵּיהֶם
חֲנִית וְחִצִּים וּלְשׁוֹנָם חֶרֶב חַדָּה:

kenafecha echesseh, I have had to take refuge under Your wings, i.e. I have undergone so many trials and afflictions that I must have expiated for my sins, at least for most of them. Once my sins have been blotted out, – I do not need to fear my adversary.

3. In the event someone were to say that since I, David, do not want to kill Saul, and I do not want him to kill me, why not let the *midat hadin*, attribute of justice do "its thing", i.e. proceed and punish Saul? After all, Saul had set out to kill you, and why would you arrogate to yourself the right to interfere? David replies "I am calling on the attribute of justice to let the attribute of kindness i.e. *el* decree my fate, i.e. *gomel alay. elyon*, i.e. I want the *midat hadin* attribute of justice to withdraw to the highest celestial regions, away from Saul, so that his pursuit of me will not lead to his own death.

David addresses himself to the argument that once the attribute of justice i.e. *elokim* has shown him favour, it will complete its task and remove the threat of Saul by killing him. Concerning this likelihood David says "I plead that my salvation will NOT be the result of interference on my behalf by the attribute of justice. Rather, I want the attribute of kindness *el* to interfere on my behalf".

Alternatively, – just as I practiced *chessed*, loving kindness in not killing him, let me continue to be governed by that attribute, so that he too will save me.

4. David replies to those who consider him arrogant in calling on the highest attribute of G'd to involve itself personally in his rescue.

He explains that he does not mean it in that way; rather THAT attribute should despatch an agent to accomplish this, i.e. *yishlach mi-shamayim*. The manner of the rescue should consist in not killing Saul, but *cheref sho-afi selah*, he who constantly strives against me, should experience shame. This should occur in brief instalments, similar to the way the attribute of *chessed* makes itself felt briefly whenever the attribute of justice is at work. (compare Psalms 7,12 and 20,2 and our commentary there)

[6]Exalt Yourself over the heavens, O God, let Your glory be over all the earth!
[7]They prepared a net for my feet to ensnare me; they dug a pit for me, but they fell into it. Selah.
[8]My heart is firm, O God; my heart is firm; I will sing, I will chant a hymn.

5. David explains that since he keeps company with lions, i.e. the men who support him are fierce warriors, he had been able to restrain them from killing Saul only with great difficulty. Especially so, inside the cave, where circumstances favoured his men greatly. Also, these men had demanded with their tongue that I act according to the principle enshrined in Jewish law in Sanhedrin 72, "if someone is about to kill you, you have to kill him first".

When I lie down to sleep, the *malachim* are *lohatim*, i.e. these messengers are burning with anger, and I would not be able to control them at such a time. The power of those men is not in their mouths, but their teeth are like spears and arrows, their tongues like a sharp edged sword. They are capable of killing Saul with their tongues ever: before I would become aware of it.

Because of this, I ask that the minor element of *chessed* kindness, that is present even when the attribute of justice is at work, would take over completely, i.e. *gomel alay*. The teeth are similar to the hands, they are executive organs of their owners' will. Despite the restraining influence the minor element of *chessed* exercises on the attribute of justice, it is enough to save Saul only when I am awake and add my own influence with my men.

6. Therefore I have chosen to ask for this division, that the attribute of justice should retreat to the farthest regions of heavens, i.e. *rumah al hashamyim elokim*, and that the *el* attribute of kindness should determine my own fate by not killing Saul and his men.

You might counter that in that case my statement "I will take cover under the shadow of Your wings until the evil, i.e. my sins have passed", makes no sense. If the *midat hadin*, attribute of justice retreats, how can you take shelter under it? David replies, *al kol ha-aretz kevodecha*, there is enough of Your glory left on earth, to ensure that the world will not disintegrate, *ad ya-avor havvot*.

7. Having called on G'd to save him from Saul, and having described the manner in which this should occur, David remembers that the problem he faces is that his adversaries are men equipped with a free will. Because of that, he wonders HOW G'd will extricate him without interfering with the free choice of the people who have

ו רוּמָה עַל-הַשָּׁמַיִם אֱלֹהִים עַל כָּל-הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדֶךָ׃
ז רֶשֶׁת הֵכִינוּ לִפְעָמַי כָּפַף נַפְשִׁי כָּרוּ לְפָנַי שִׁיחָה
נָפְלוּ בְתוֹכָהּ סֶלָה׃
ח נָכוֹן לִבִּי אֱלֹהִים נָכוֹן לִבִּי אָשִׁירָה וַאֲזַמֵּרָה׃

already prepared the net for David to fall into. We have explained this problem in connection with Proverbs 3,25–26, "Do not fear sudden terror, or the holocaust brought on by the wicked when it comes, because the Lord will guard you against foolishness and keep your foot from becoming ensnared".

G'd lets the wicked exercise their plans without interference, but He concentrates on protecting you from falling into their trap. Here, David says "do not be surprised that I expressed the certain conviction that G'd would save me from people who exercise their free will".

This is G'd's way. He has done so for me repeatedly, whenever my enemies prepared a net for my steps. Because ***kafaf nafshi***, my soul bowed down before You, – they have fallen into their own net. Not only did G'd protect MY feet, but He allowed THEM to fall into it, ***selah***, ultimately.

An example is the time Saul promised me the hand of his daughter in marriage if I killed 1000 Philistine soldiers and brought him their foreskins, when in fact he had intended for me to be killed by them. (Samuel I 18,25) He fell victim to his own plans, since he could not then refuse me his daughter!

Another time was in Samuel I 19,11, when Saul wanted to kill David and Michal arranged for his timely escape. Saul and his men remained guilty for that attempt to kill David. Similarly, we are told in Yevamot 76, that when Doeg incited against David, it was because of his Moabite ancestry. He had convened the Sanhedrin Supreme Court, to have David excluded from the Jewish nation. However, as a result of all these machinations, David's status was PROVEN to be perfectly legitimate. Now, Saul has fallen into my hands instead of vice versa.

8. David sings to G'd for having remained steadfast in spite of all the provocations suffered through the proximity of his pursuers. Just as his heart remained steadfast on all other occasions when he had faced troubles, – so it is steadfast now, also. Therefore, he has to give thanks to G'd for helping him preserve his faith and moral fortitude.

9*Awake, O my soul! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will*
wake the dawn.
10*I will praise You among the peoples, O LORD; I will*
sing a hymn to You among the nations;
11*for Your faithfulness is as high as heaven; Your*
steadfastness reaches to the sky.
12*Exalt Yourself over the heavens, O God, let Your glory*
be over all the earth!

58 *For the leader; al* tashheth. *Of David. A* michtam.
2*O mighty ones, do you really decree what is just?*
Do you judge mankind with equity?

9. You could question my statement, by pointing out that the holy spirit had departed from me and I had to make the request "awake my honour awake psalter etc.". In other words, I have had to request inspiration both from the *Shechinah* and from the North wind, in order to activate my harp (Berachot 3), and that G'd had to "raise my head" (Psalms 3,4) as a preliminary to my receiving inspiration by the holy spirit even BEFORE my troubles had started. David answers that he had always been awake before dawn, *a-irah shachar*, I awakened the dawn; there had never been impediments to his becoming a vessel for the holy spirit that had been due to his lack of preparedness.

10. In Psalms 19, we have proven that according to our sages (Chagigah 12), there are 7 heavens, that the world of galaxies is the one immediately beyond our globe, i.e. "heaven" number 2. The regions containing abstract spiritual beings begin with "heaven" number 3, i.e. *shechakim*.

Earlier (verses 3 and 6) David had requested the attribute of justice to retreat to the farthest of those 7 "heavens" and that only an emanation of the *Shechinah*'s "wings" should remain close to earth. Since David was hardly in a position to truly evaluate the movements of the *Shechinah*, how could he have it simultaneously "above" the heavens (verse 6) and over the whole earth? (verse 11)? Besides, the request in verse 6 presupposes that the *midat hadin*, attribute of justice, had previously come to earth. How did David know this?

Furthermore, it is hardly in keeping with His Honour, *kevodo* to be confined to being *al ha-aretz* on earth only?

David says that since the gentile nations cannot understand the

ט עוּרָה כְבוֹדִי עוּרָה הַנֵּבֶל וְכִנּוֹר אָעִירָה שָׁחַר:
י אוֹדְךָ בָעַמִּים אֲדֹנָי אֲזַמֶּרְךָ בַּלְאֻמִּים:
יא כִּי-גָדֹל עַד-שָׁמַיִם חַסְדֶּךָ וְעַד-שְׁחָקִים אֲמִתֶּךָ:
יב רוֹמָה עַל-שָׁמַיִם אֱלֹהִים עַל כָּל-הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדֶךָ:

נח א לַמְנַצֵּחַ אַל-תַּשְׁחֵת לְדָוִד מִכְתָּם:
ב הַאֻמְנָם אֵלֶם צֶדֶק תְּדַבֵּרוּן מֵישָׁרִים תִּשְׁפְּטוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם:

apparently conflicting abodes of G'd, they conceive of Him only as in the heavens. Had I expressed my thanks to You amongst the nations, says David, I could not have portrayed the manner in which You could be simultaneously above the heavens WITHOUT withdrawing Your influence from earth, as they would not have believed me, would not have accepted the insights I have been granted.

11. All David says therefore, is that G'd's kindness extends to the region of the galaxies, i.e. outer space, whereas His attribute of justice extends to the regions above that, i.e. the region called *shechakim.* Earth's affairs are determined through astrological factors, i.e. through the *raki-a*, in this instance the lowest of the "heavens".

12. So much for the wisdom of the gentiles. The truth is, however, that the *Shechinah* can and does function simultaneously both as "low" as our own earth, and as "high" as the 7th heaven, i.e. *aravot.* David therefore repeats, i.e. affirms what he had asked for in verse 6.

Psalm 58

1. Our sages in Midrash Tehillim and Yalkut Shimoni on Samuel I 24, item 133 state that Avner (Saul's general) had told Saul that the tear in his mantle had been due to thorns having ripped it, and that this forms the subject matter of this hymn.

When David challenged Avner in Samuel I 26,14 to answer him, he referred to the fact that unlike the time he had cut off a corner of Saul's cloak, this time Avner could not explain how he had obtained the spear and bottle without admitting that David had been in a position to harm Saul and had chosen not to do so.

The hymn is addressed to Him who should help David "not to

3In your minds you devise wrongdoing in the land; with your hands you deal out lawlessness.
4The wicked are defiant from birth; the liars go astray from the womb.
5Their venom is like that of a snake, a deaf viper that stops its ears

become the destroyer of the anointed one, i.e. the crowned one, a poem".

Another view: David considered it like a gift from G'd that he had not needed to treat this encounter in a way that might forfeit him his future kingdom. Not losing his kingdom, was to David equivalent to being crowned, i.e. *michtam* a crown.

2. David does not complain about Avner and the likes of him, who told Saul lies about how he came to lose the corner of his cloak, but about all the other people who had remained silent instead of coming forward and asking the king why he repaid good with evil, since David had shown him only consideration. Instead of keeping silent, "you should have spoken justly, you should have judged people fairly!" This is in line with our commentary on the Mishnah in Avot 1,17, "I have not found anything better for the body than silence", i.e. that silence is preferable to talk ONLY in connection with matters pertaining to the body. When it comes to matters of a spiritual nature, *miley de-shemayah*, speaking out is far better than remaining silent. However, – one should speak only ***tzedek***, and give every person the benefit of the doubt, (Shavuot 30), based on Leviticus, 19,15, "judge your fellow man using ***tzedek***, fairness".

3. Do not think that by being silent and inactive you can do no wrong. Wrongs, i.e. *olot* can be committed by merely thinking about it, i.e. ***belev***, in the heart. The forces of impurity *tif-alun* set in motion other forces in heaven. Do not think that G'd does not consider those *olot* as punishable because they are not accompanied by the actual acts of wrongdoing (Kiddushin 40), since your silence causes Saul to continue in his efforts to kill me. Not only that, it may force me and the people with me to kill some of them. In this way, you may become responsible for many wrongs. Even though your sin may be in the realm of thinking only, it will pave the way ***tefalessun*** to committing violent acts on earth, i.e. publicly.

The reason is that by the time this stage has been reached, you will even rationalize your violent acts, ***tefallessun***, i.e. "EVEN THEM OUT". You will imagine those acts to have been justified. For all the

ג אַף-בְּלֵב עוֹלוֹת תִּפְעָלוּן בָּאָרֶץ חֲמַס יְדֵיכֶם תְּפַלֵּסוּן׃
ד זֹרוּ רְשָׁעִים מֵרָחֶם תָּעוּ מִבֶּטֶן דִּבְּרֵי כָזָב׃
ה חֲמַת-לָמוֹ כִּדְמוּת חֲמַת-נָחָשׁ כְּמוֹ-פֶתֶן חֵרֵשׁ יַאְטֵם אָזְנוֹ׃

above reasons, your silence at this time will be considered culpable already.

4. David says that up until now he has spoken about keeping silent about telling the king to treat me well since I have saved his life.

I am even angrier however, at those who deliberately tell him lies, so that he believes his cloak was torn by thorns. Any normal person can distinguish between something that has been torn off and something that has been cut off.

To what must I ascribe such twisting of the truth? Shall I assume that it is due to a genetic character weakness *mibeten*, stemming from the belly, the seat of physical satisfactions? This would explain why a person indulges in sins which afford him such physical gratifications. Where is the gratification to be obtained by telling Saul these lies about me? Or, if it is a genetic weakness due to the parents having united in marriage, *mirechem* for the sake of physical gratification rather than for the sake of the commandment of raising G'd fearing children? If so, wrongs of a sexual nature could be the result; in such event the children of such marriages may tend to have warped personalities, compare Hoseah 5,7 "they have estranged children because they betrayed the purposes of G'd!" But how would such genetic weakness account for telling Saul these lies? It seems unlikely that the vice of being deceitful is related directly to a father's motive in marrying someone unsuitable.

Therefore, *zoru resha-im merechem*, the fact that the wicked became estranged in their deeds already prior to birth, *mirechem*, *ta-u mibeten dovrey kazav*, that they had learned to lie before they were born, is difficult to accept.

5. And if I were to blame the residual pollution which every human being suffers from as a result of the serpent having polluted Adam and Eve, (Shabbat 146), and that lying is certainly part of the serpent's work, seeing he had seduced Eve by means of lies, (Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim item 613 and many other sources); it would then be *chamat lamo* the poisonous venom dating back to earliest times. This too is not unlikely. How could the venom of the serpent's tongue be stronger than the serpent itself? The serpent itself can be prevented from using its venom by any snake charmer! In other

[6]*so as not to hear the voice of charmers or the expert mutterer of spells.*
[7]*O God, smash their teeth in their mouth; shatter the fangs of lions, O LORD;*
[8]*let them melt, let them vanish like water; let Him aim His arrows that they be cut down;*
[9]*like a snail that melts away as it moves; like a woman's stillbirth, may they never see the sun!*
[10]*Before the thorns grow into a bramble, may He whirl them away alive in fury.*

words, if the snake's tongue is subject to control by the snake charmer, how can the mere victim of the snake's tongue be held blameless for not controlling his own tongue? Still, Avner and his ilk have acted as if they had been deaf serpents, refusing to listen to their "charmers"!

6. They act as if they had never heard the voice of the charmers, as if they had never been exposed to the cleverest spell binders. *Peten* is a different strain of serpent, not related to the *nachash* of *gan eden*. Avner's lies therefore cannot be excused by hereditary tendencies dating back to the *nachash*.

Avner proved that he was deaf even to the most convincing arguments, as we know from (Samuel I, 26)

7. It is the manner of snake charmers to grasp the snakes while charming them, and extract their venom. In this way the snake becomes harmless. Possibly, after David has compared Avner's ilk to poisonous snakes, he now continues the simile and describes how G'd should destroy their teeth in their mouths. When that happens, they may realize that G'd compares them to snakes, and this is what is meant by the first half of our verse.

There is a second group of people, those who not only incite others by giving slanderous advice, but who are ready themselves to act on such advice, to personally carry it out. These people can only be uprooted by direct action. They are *malte-ot kefirim*, the great fangs of the lions; You G'd have to knock them out. Since they are not as vile as the *peten cheresh*, David leaves their destruction to *Hashem*, i.e. the attribute of mercy, whereas the first group he asks to be neutralized by the attribute of justice, i.e. *elokim*.

8. David assumes that the latter group, when experiencing G'd's retribution, i.e. *netotz hashem*, will do *teshuvah*, i.e. *yimassu kemo mayim*, they will despise themselves, seeing that G'd has despised them. They will depart from Saul like water which runs off. Once

ה אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִשְׁמַע לְקוֹל מְלַחֲשִׁים חוֹבֵר חֲבָרִים מְחֻכָּם:
ו אֱלֹהִים הֲרָס-שִׁינֵמוֹ בְּפִימוֹ מַלְתְּעוֹת כְּפִירִים נְתוֹץ יְהוָה:
ז יִמָּאֲסוּ כְמוֹ-מַיִם יִתְהַלְּכוּ-לָמוֹ יִדְרֹךְ חִצָּו כְּמוֹ יִתְמֹלָלוּ:
ח כְּמוֹ שַׁבְלוּל תֶּמֶס יַהֲלֹךְ נֵפֶל אֵשֶׁת בַּל-חָזוּ שָׁמֶשׁ:
ט בְּטֶרֶם יָבִינוּ סִירֹתֵיכֶם אָטָד כְּמוֹ-חַי כְּמוֹ-חָרוֹן יִשְׂעָרֵנּוּ:

Saul will watch his men deserting him, he will become weakened, sc that even if he wants to employ his power, *yidroch chitzav*, *kemo yitmollelu*, they will seem to crumble of their own accord.

9. The Psalmist uses the trail of mucous matter a snail leaves behind as it moves, as an example of how the very normal motions of certain people contribute to their dissolving altogether. (*temess* = melts)

David, who was meant to be stillborn, i.e. *nefel met*, "a woman's droppings", experienced such a progressive loss of life juice since he had to flee again and again. The reason snails are in that predicament is because most of their bodies have never been exposed to sunlight. We applied to them the verse (Eccles. 7,11) "wisdom is good with an inheritance, and a boon to those who see the sun". Although wisdom paired with wealth is a good combination, seeing the sun, i.e. seeing the sun set and give way to dominance of the moon at night because it had refused to share the power with the sun by day, – is an experience leading to even greater wisdom. (Chullin 60)

Man can learn from the sun how to suffer eclipses WITHOUT complaint. Otherwise, a combination of wealth and wisdom will lead to arrogance.

David complains that his adversaries, by not looking at the sun, *bal chazu shemesh* and drawing the right conclusions, have made their intelligence and wealth something sterile.

They should have realized that their conduct, similar to that of the moon before it had been diminished in size, would lead to G'd diminishing them in size rather than me, says David.

10. Crediting thorns with intelligence and understanding seems really strange. Perhaps David addresses those who have heard

[11]*The righteous man will rejoice when he sees revenge;*
he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked.
[12]*Men will say, "There is, then, a reward for the*
righteous; there is, indeed, divine justice on earth."

59 *For the leader; al* tashheth. *Of David. A* michtam*; when*
Saul sent men to watch his house in order to put him to
death.
[2]*Save me from my enemies, O my God; secure me*
against my assailants.

Avner tell Saul that his cloak had been ripped by thorns; he is asking them "are you really so simple minded that you do not know yet that thorns are ***atad*** living bramble bushes, that they are like humans and can cut corners of a cloak like a knife or scissors? Unless you credit a bramble bush with such intelligence, how could a piece of cloth which had clearly been CUT off, be the result of a tear caused by thorns?

The holy spirit responds to David by saying "does not the righteous person who sees revenge, who bathes in the blood of the wicked, have real joy, i.e. ***yismach***"? Is that not better than merely asking G'd to draw the fangs of the serpent, i.e. to neutralize your enemies?

12. David replies – if the ***rasha***, wicked person were to die on account of the ***tzaddik***, ***ach peri latzadik***, the accumulated merits of said ***tzaddik***, i.e. his ***peri*** would be reduced, at least in the eyes of the people watching what is happening. The word ***ach*** and ***rak*** always indicate that something is being reduced or diminished. (Talmud Jerusalem, Berachot 9,7, compare Psalm 7.)

To this, the holy spirit replies that there is another ***ach*** to be considered in that context. It is the need for people to observe G'd, i.e. the attribute of justice in action against the wicked. Otherwise, people will say that G'd does not judge in this life on earth, ONLY after death. This ***ach*** would ascribe to G'd a much smaller role in His supervision of what goes on on earth than is justified. When people observe the fall of the wicked, they will not be able to claim that G'd's domain is ONLY in heaven and in the hereafter, the world of spirits. This is why Avner cannot be allowed to die of natural causes.

Psalm 59

1. David sings this hymn to Divine Providence which has

יא יִשְׂמַח צַדִּיק כִּי-חָזָה נָקָם פְּעָמָיו יִרְחַץ בְּדַם הָרָשָׁע:
יב וְיֹאמַר אָדָם אַךְ-פְּרִי לַצַּדִּיק אַךְ יֵשׁ-אֱלֹהִים שֹׁפְטִים בָּאָרֶץ:

נט א לַמְנַצֵּחַ אַל-תַּשְׁחֵת לְדָוִד מִכְתָּם בִּשְׁלֹחַ שָׁאוּל וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ אֶת-הַבַּיִת לַהֲמִיתוֹ:
ב הַצִּילֵנִי מֵאֹיְבַי אֱלֹהָי מִמִּתְקוֹמְמַי תְּשַׂגְּבֵנִי:

functioned for him in a preventive fashion, saying "do not destroy David's chance to express his poem for having retained the crown of the kingdom".

Bishlo-ach Sha-ul, i.e. even when a free willed person of Saul's calibre had attempted to kill him, and had set guards to watch over his house to put him to death (in the morning) (Samuel I 19,11) this Providence was in evidence.

Had Saul's orders been to capture David DURING the night, immediately, he would not have had time to make his escape. Neither would he have been able to escape if Saul had him ordered killed inside his home. Divine Providence became evident through Saul having ordered David's arrest only when morning would break.

2. There are two categories of enemies; the first category are the sins a person has committed, the "enemies" of his soul; the second category are people, i.e. the enemies of his body. As long as there are no *oyvey nefesh*, enemies of one's soul, a person need not fear the other enemies, since G'd would not allow them to succeed against him.

David appeals to G'd that the first category of "enemies" should be removed. However, the problem is that each specific difficulty a person encounters does not activate ALL the various sins i.e. "enemies" he had committed; rather a specific type of sin, "enemy" is activated in connection with specific problems a person is apt to encounter in life. Hence *mi-mitkommemay*, "the respective sins that raise their heads against me" at different times *tesagveni*, raise me above them!

David emphasizes *elokay*, when You my G'd save me from my "enemies" i.e. remove them, then I can truly call You "my G'd". Since I do not know which specific trouble is due to which specific sin, I ask generally "save me from my sins" (enemies).

3Save me from evildoers; deliver me from murderers.
4For see, they lie in wait for me; fierce men plot against me for no offense of mine, for no transgression, O LORD;
5for no guilt of mine do they rush to array themselves against me.
Look, rouse Yourself on my behalf!
6You, O LORD God of hosts, God of Israel, bestir Yourself to bring all nations to account; have no mercy on any treacherous villain. Selah.
7They come each evening growling like dogs, roaming the city.
8They rave with their mouths, sharp words are on their lips; [they think,] "Who hears?"

3. After that David asks to be saved from *po-aley aven*, those who commit violence, i.e. his human enemies; the guards watching his house, in this instance. He asks "save me from the bloodthirsty men", i.e. those who want to spill my blood (plural) i.e. through spilling mine they spill the blood of any of my as yet unborn descendants.

4. When I referred to the need to remove my sins first, says David, it was because they, first and foremost, lie in wait for my soul; if it were not for them, the impudent humans would not be gathering against me. There are three categories of *oyvey nefesh*, enemies of the soul, i.e. categories of sin. They are *chet*, *avon* and *pesha*. Of these categories, I know that I am not guilty of *pesha*, since I never rebelled against You G'd intentionally. The danger to my soul does not stem from *chatati*, my unintentional sins either, since I know You to be a merciful G'd, who does not subject me to all these dangers merely as a punishment for unintentional errors.

5. There remains only *avon*, a sin committed knowingly, but without rebellious intent. If I were free from *avon*, because You saved me, – I would not need to fear all their running and preparing themselves against me. However, I request only that Your Providence will "awaken", *urah u-reay* to help ME, – not to kill Saul and his men. David emphasizes *likrati*, towards me, as opposed to *likratam*, towards them.

6. The reason I do not appeal for death against my Jewish enemies is that since You G'd are the G'd of all armies, all mankind, only these Jewish people have been associated with Your name, i.e. You call Yourself "the G'd of Israel" (not the G'd of the Egyptians etc.)

In the event that You will tell me that once this *hashgachah*,

ג הַצִּילֵנִי מִפֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן וּמֵאַנְשֵׁי דָמִים הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי:
ד כִּי הִנֵּה אָרְבוּ לְנַפְשִׁי יָגוּרוּ עָלַי עַזִּים לֹא-פִשְׁעִי
וְלֹא-חַטָּאתִי יְהוָה:
ה בְּלִי-עָוֹן יְרוּצוּן וְיִכּוֹנָנוּ עוּרָה לִקְרָאתִי וּרְאֵה:
ו וְאַתָּה יְהוָה-אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָקִיצָה
לִפְקֹד כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם אַל-תָּחֹן כָּל-בֹּגְדֵי אָוֶן סֶלָה:
ז יָשׁוּבוּ לָעֶרֶב יֶהֱמוּ כַכֶּלֶב וִיסוֹבְבוּ עִיר:
ח הִנֵּה יַבִּיעוּן בְּפִיהֶם חֲרָבוֹת בְּשִׂפְתוֹתֵיהֶם כִּי-מִי
שֹׁמֵעַ:

Providence is awakened, it cannot be "semi-awake", but will also act against other evil doers, and that I therefore could not ask to be saved in such a manner, then I request that you "awaken" in order to punish ALL the gentile nations, and not show favour to those faithless evil doers, ever.

The request is similar to the one in Psalms 79,6 "pour out Your wrath (against Israel) over the OTHER nations instead, since they refuse to acknowledge Your existence etc." It is also similar to prayers we recite on the days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur when we say "put Your fear on all Your creatures". The intention is, that if today turns out to be *nora*, awesome, – make sure ALL people will have reason to experience that fear etc.

After all, even if Israel has sinned once or twice, they perform Your wishes on other occasions, as opposed to the gentile nations. Do not show them favour, for they are constantly, i.e. *selah* committing treachery and evil.

I wish that they would return by evening, i.e. reconsider their conduct before the sun sets on the Jewish state and the temple will be destroyed, seeing the gentiles surround the city and howl like dogs.

8. They will certainly continue to blaspheme even more after they have conquered Jerusalem, expressing regret ever to have entertained fear of the Jewish G'd. They will justify their blasphemous behaviour by saying *ki mi shome-a*, for who is there to hear?! (i.e. there is no Jewish G'd, similar to Psalms 94,7 "they say the Lord will not see")

9But You, O LORD, laugh at them; You mock all the nations.
10O my strength, I wait for You; for God is my haven.
11My faithful God will come to aid me; God will let me gloat over my watchful foes.
12Do not kill them lest my people be unmindful; with Your power make wanderers of them; bring them low, O our shield, the LORD, 13because of their sinful mouths, the words on their lips.
Let them be trapped by their pride, and by the imprecations and lies they utter.
14In Your fury put an end to them; put an end to them that they be no more; that it may be known to the ends of the earth that God does rule over Jacob. Selah.
15They come each evening growling like dogs, roaming the city.

9. You are laughing and ridiculing them, since the reason You have not visited retribution on them is NOT because of lack of Your providential supervision of earthly affairs.

10. Had I possessed the strength, and G'd's help, I myself would have exterminated them; but, I have to keep myself in check since I have said in verse 6 that I wanted G'd to act as the attribute of mercy, – in connection with Israel. I can only hope that You will transform Yourself into the attribute of justice when dealing with the gentiles. This attribute of justice, ***elokim***, has already been my own fortress and refuge, ***misgavi***. At that time, I had waited for You to resume Your role of ***midat harachamim***, i.e. ***uzzo elecha eshmorah***.

11. The reason that I did NOT wipe out the gentiles is that I was pre-empted by the G'd of kindness, i.e. Abraham's G'd, who did not let me do this, as we know from Psalm 2,6–7, (compare our commentary). Briefly, – the only certain guarantee that Israel does not wind up in purgatory is our suffering the exiles under the 4 kingdoms. This experience is in lieu of any suffering in purgatory after death. It had become Abraham's choice at the time G'd first promised to give the land of Canaan to his descendants. (Genesis, chapter 15). Therefore, David says, G'd as attribute of justice will show me ***be-shoreroy***, some of the gentiles who lie in wait for me so that I can kill them, – but not all.

12. David does not want G'd to destroy all the nations, now that G'd's anger has been aroused. If they all would die, their absence

ס וְאַתָּה יְהוָה תִּשְׂחַק-לָמוֹ תִּלְעַג לְכָל-גּוֹיִם:
ט עֻזּוֹ אֵלֶיךָ אֶשְׁמֹרָה כִּי-אֱלֹהִים מִשְׂגַּבִּי:
יא אֱלֹהֵי חַסְדּוֹ יְקַדְּמֵנִי אֱלֹהִים יַרְאֵנִי בְשׁוּרָרָי:
יב אַל-תַּהַרְגֵם פֶּן-יִשְׁכְּחוּ עַמִּי הֲנִיעֵמוֹ בְחֵילְךָ
וְהוֹרִידֵמוֹ מָגִנֵּנוּ אֲדֹנָי:
יג חַטַּאת-פִּימוֹ דְּבַר-שִׂפְתֵימוֹ וְיִלָּכְדוּ בִגְאוֹנָם וּמֵאָלָה
וּמִכַּחַשׁ יְסֻפָּרוּ:
יד כַּלֵּה בְחֵמָה כַּלֵּה וְאֵינֵמוֹ וְיֵדְעוּ כִּי-אֱלֹהִים מֹשֵׁל
בְּיַעֲקֹב לְאַפְסֵי הָאָרֶץ סֶלָה:

would soon be forgotten by *ami*, my people, and with it the fact that what had caused their deaths was that they had opposed G'd's will. "Shake them up with Your great power, topple them, our shield o G'd"! Their continued existence in reduced circumstances will serve as a lesson to my own people. Since You are our shield, we need not fear them.

13. David wants their punishment to last while they admit that they had sinned with their mouths (see verse 8) when they had ridiculed G'd saying "He does not hear us blaspheme", at the time they had surrounded Jerusalem. They must become entrapped *yilachdu* by their arrogance, *bige-onam*. Now G'd should not let them leave this world until they admit their wrong. They must admit that their mouths *chatat piymo* was at fault. When they will claim that theirs was ONLY a *chatat* an unintentional sin, they should experience additional punishment. When they experience that, they may finally *yesa-peru*, admit, tell, that they had lied and cursed purposely.

14. Now that the guilty nations have been forced to acknowledge their sinful conduct, – do not blot out their evil; like Sodom destroy them since their sin had been public, they did not even want to conceal the evil they had been doing. *kaleh be-cheymah* refers to those who destroyed the first temple, *kaleh ve-eynemo* to those who destroyed the second temple.

Since they had thought that G'd's domain was restricted to the land of Israel, and had come to an end even there, OR that He had handed that domain over to agents, they must first become aware *ve-yede-u* that G'd's domain extends to the ends of the earth, and that He personally supervises what goes on in our world.

15. Seeing David had spoken of Saul's soldiers who had

16 *They wander in search of food; and whine if they are not satisfied.*
17 *But I will sing of Your strength, extol each morning Your faithfulness; for You have been my haven, a refuge in time of trouble.*
18 *O my strength, to You I sing hymns; for God is my haven, my faithful God.*

60

For the leader; on shushan eduth. *A* michtam *of David (to be taught),*

surrounded his house in order to have him killed, (Samuel I 19,10) – he continues by going back to verse 10 in Samuel I 19,10. It does not mention there that David took refuge in his OWN house, it only says "he fled and escaped that night". If he did not go home, – how could Michal have saved him? Therefore, what we read in verse 11 can only be details being filled in about what had been alluded to in verse 10. David had gone home BY DAY, and Saul had sent his troops by nightfall, while David remained unaware of his house being placed under guard. Michal who had noticed, alerted him saying "unless you flee immediately you will be killed tomorrow". David, in our verse refers to a return of the guards later at night when they would check if he was still inside the house, and when they would surround the house and bellow like dogs when they did not find him, and then surround the whole city instead, to locate his hideout! He is afraid of that.

16. Therefore, he explains that while the guards had been busy eating their meal in one location together with Saul, they had not eaten their fill, *lo yisbe-u* in order not to leave the house unattended for long. They came back and stayed outside all night long, not realizing that David had used their brief absence to escape.

17. While the soldiers had spent the night believing David to be inside their net, David would sing to G'd in thanksgiving, from his new hideout. He thanks G'd that 1) the soldiers *vayalinu*, spent the whole night OUTSIDE his house; 2) that they did not eat their whole meal, because this is what had made them think that David could not have escaped yet. The *im* and *ashir* i.e. future tense of "I will sing", indicates that he had asked G'd to provide these 2 conditions to enable him to escape successfully.

At this time, David says *ashir uzecha* I will sing about Your might; when I find myself in a safe place in the morning, the time Saul

טו וְיָשֻׁבוּ לָעֶרֶב יֶהֱמוּ כַכֶּלֶב וִיסוֹבְבוּ עִיר:
טז הֵמָּה יְנִיעוּן לֶאֱכֹל אִם-לֹא יִשְׂבְּעוּ וַיָּלִינוּ:
יז וַאֲנִי אָשִׁיר עֻזֶּךָ וַאֲרַנֵּן לַבֹּקֶר חַסְדֶּךָ כִּי-הָיִיתָ מִשְׂגָּב
לִי וּמָנוֹס בְּיוֹם צַר-לִי:
יח עֻזִּי אֵלֶיךָ אֲזַמֵּרָה כִּי-אֱלֹהִים מִשְׂגַּבִּי אֱלֹהֵי חַסְדִּי:

ס א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-שׁוֹשַׁן עֵדוּת מִכְתָּם לְדָוִד לְלַמֵּד:

appointed to kill me, *aranen chasdecha* I will jubilate about Your kindness. One must not think that praising G'd's power *oz* is hardly appropriate when one had to flee, that on the contrary flight is a sign of weakness.

True, when attacked by the lion or the bear, (Samuel I 17,36) or in my confrontation with Goliath I did not flee but defeated them. However, when I face Jewish pursuers, fleeing is not an act of weakness, but a victory over my legal right to kill them in self defense, and thereby spilling Jewish blood. I compare my victory *misgav li* when You were my refuge then – to *manoss li* Your granting me escape now when I flee Jewish pursuers. Both instances are victories, but of a different kind.

18. Even if my self control is *uzzi*, my strength, I will sing to You, I will give credit to You G'd for this, since G'd has remained my *misgav* safeguard, i.e. my pursuers have actually caught up with me, forcing me into a confrontation.

In this way the attribute of justice, *elokim* which causes me all my pain has become *chasdi*, an attribute of mercy for me, since the *yissurim*, tribulations had been due to some sin of mine. (Shabbat 55)

Psalm 60

1. Seeing that our sages (Rashi on verse 3) say that this Psalm discusses the Jews under the exile of the Edomites, Romans etc. we must understand why David's wars against Aram Naharayim and Aram Tzovah are discussed here.

First we must understand the verse in Chronicles I 18,12; in which the campaign against Edom is described as having been waged by Avishai, Yoav's brother. Nowhere in Chronicles or the book of Samuel

2when he fought with Aram-Naharaim and Aram-Zobah, and Joab returned and defeated Edom—[an army] of twelve thousand men— in the Valley of Salt.
3O God, You have rejected us, You have made a breach in us; You have been angry; restore us!
4You have made the land quake; You have torn it open. Mend its fissures, for it is collapsing.
5You have made Your people suffer hardship; You have given us wine that makes us reel.

is there any mention of Yoav in connection with that campaign. How can the Psalmist here in verse 2 state that "Yoav returned and smote Edom in the valley of salt, killing 12000."? In Chronicles, Avishai was reported as having slain 18000 in the same valley!

In the book of Samuel, the campaign is credited to David, (Samuel II 8,13), although he is only reported as having appointed governors over Edom, the soldiers slain are supposed to have been 18000. How do we reconcile these various apparently contradictory statements?

Presumably, after Avishai, either with David or at his command had slain 18000 Edomites, – Yoav, returning from the campaign against Aram slew another 12000 Edomites in the same region. The book of Samuel mentions David as making a "name" after returning from the campaign against Aram. David is then reported as appointing Jewish governors in the land of Edom.

David wondered at the significance of these events. Once, he had killed 18000 Edomites AFTER returning from Aram. Another time, Yoav had killed 12000 Edomites (the time mentioned here) battling them in the same valley of salt.

David considers this as a omen for the future. Since Amalek is Edom, i.e. descended from Edom, and the 4th of the exiles in store for the Jewish people is commonly known as the exile of Edom, the defeat of Edom the first time refers to the defeat of Amalek indirectly, i.e. through the victory over Aram. In the future, prior to the ultimate redemption while still in exile, however, Israel would defeat Amalek-Edom in a direct confrontation. The defeat of Aram, on the other hand, presaged a defeat of Amalek during one of the previous 3 exiles of the Jewish people.

The first defeat of Amalek-Edom would not occur through an independent Jewish nation. This is why David's name is not mentioned; the defeat of Amalek at that time was incidental, i.e. when on the way to war with Aram.

ג בְּהַצּוֹתוֹ אֶת אֲרַם נַהֲרַיִם וְאֶת-אֲרַם צוֹבָה וַיָּשָׁב יוֹאָב
וַיַּךְ אֶת-אֱדוֹם בְּגֵיא-מֶלַח שְׁנֵים עָשָׂר אָלֶף:
ד אֱלֹהִים זְנַחְתָּנוּ פְרַצְתָּנוּ אָנַפְתָּ תְּשׁוֹבֵב לָנוּ:
ה הִרְעַשְׁתָּה אֶרֶץ פְּצַמְתָּהּ רְפָה שְׁבָרֶיהָ כִּי-מָטָה:
ו הֶרְאִיתָ עַמְּךָ קָשָׁה הִשְׁקִיתָנוּ יַיִן תַּרְעֵלָה:

Similarly, in Shushan, during the exile under the Medes, when G'd saved us from Ahasverus, we defeated Haman.

This hymn is dedicated to events in Shushan, where Israel was redeemed through the fall of Haman and his companions, i.e. Amalek. This serves as *eydut*, testimony, reason for David to record a *michtam*, poem that Amalek's eventual and total defeat will also be at the hands of David/Mashiach.

2. The events surrounding the battle of Aram, when 18000 Edomites were killed also made David a "name". It need not be publicized in the book of Samuel because *vaya-ass David shem*, David had ALREADY made a name for himself. When David spoke about *michtam ledavid*, an epigram, he is certain that in the future too, he will be the one to wipe out Amalek. This is the meaning of "Yoav returned a second time and struck Edom etc."

3. David refers to his comment that Edom had fallen into his hands as hints of the fall of Haman during the period of the Medes, and of the fall of Amalek on the day G'd will enact His revenge on the gentile nations. He says that our main concern is to pray for the final redemption. The threat of Haman, – according to Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai in Megillah 12 – was not AS REAL as the Jews had thought, since their having bowed to Haman's idol had been due to duress, fear of death, not because they believed in the idol.

Similarly, the decree G'd allowed to be promulgated was also meant to frighten them. Had G'd REALLY abandoned us at that time of Shushan "You would have crushed us". However, *anafta*, You displayed anger, *teshovev lanu* in order to make us return, repent.

4. At that time, even though You made the earth shake with Your terrible decree, – *refah shevare-ha*, there were not many broken pieces; only one, a solitary nationwide crack, the sin of having bowed to Haman's idol. Not so during the last exile under the Amalek/Edomites, when we are splintered into many groups, weak little shards, each guilty of different sins. We are about to totter, *matah* and require that You perform ALL Your miracles to rescue us.

5. Even though I have said that during the exile of the Medes You

[6]*Give those who fear You because of Your truth a banner for rallying.* Selah.
[7]*That those whom You love might be rescued, deliver with Your right hand and answer me.*
[8]*God promised in His sanctuary that I would exultingly divide up Shechem, and measure the Valley of Sukkoth;*
[9]*Gilead and Manasseh would be mine, Ephraim my chief stronghold, Judah my scepter;* [10]*Moab would be my washbasin; on Edom I would cast my shoe; acclaim me, O Philistia!*

had only been angry in order to frighten us, – nonetheless the DECREE which made us quake was ***kashah***, tough. This was not something merely for "show", but we fasted 3 consecutive days and nights, the entire Jewish population of Shushan. Those who had drunk forbidden wine at Ahasverus' banquet, now had to taste the bitter taste of the cup of poison. We have explained in our commentary on Esther 1,8, that the Talmud explained that though Haman had agreed that the Jews need not drink the forbidden wine, they could not withstand the temptation to drink ***yeyn malchut***, i.e. wine from the Royal cellar.

Hence, they could not claim to have committed THAT sin under duress. Even Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai agrees that THIS sin needed ACTUAL expiation, not mere fright.

6. Then You not only saved devout ones from death, but gave them a banner of victory which would always enable them to raise themselves, the banner of Your eternal truth. The Jews accepted the Torah THEN, AFTER the threat had passed, i.e. from a freely made decision, not as at Sinai when the psychological pressure was overwhelming. They now ***kiymu*** kept, or confirmed what they had previously accepted, ***kiblu***. (Shabbat 88) The reason Jews COULD do that was because the first time we had achieved victory over Amalek/Edom the conditions of our exile were not too harsh.

7. But now in the exile under the Romans and subsequently, we need that You rescue us first with Your right hand, i.e. that Your ***Shechinah*** return from its self imposed exile; after that "answer me" i.e. confirm that I am the one fighting on behalf of Israel, the Messiah.

8. Having said the final redemption will require an act by David/Messiah, he says that he is not boastful about his role. Rather, G'd through His holy spirit has said that I would exult in being the one to allocate to each tribe its inheritance in the land of Israel as far as the border of Egypt, which according to Saadyah Gaon is known as

ו נָתַתָּה לִירֵאֶיךָ נֵס לְהִתְנוֹסֵס מִפְּנֵי קֶשֶׁט סֶלָה:
ז לְמַעַן יֵחָלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וַעֲנֵנוּ:
ח אֱלֹהִים דִּבֶּר בְּקָדְשׁוֹ אֶעֱלֹזָה אֲחַלְקָה שְׁכֶם וְעֵמֶק סֻכּוֹת אֲמַדֵּד:
ט לִי גִלְעָד וְלִי מְנַשֶּׁה וְאֶפְרַיִם מָעוֹז רֹאשִׁי יְהוּדָה מְחֹקְקִי:
י מוֹאָב סִיר רַחְצִי עַל-אֱדוֹם אַשְׁלִיךְ נַעֲלִי עָלַי פְּלֶשֶׁת הִתְרוֹעָעִי:

emek sukkot, south of Eretz Yisrael proper, as divided up in the days of Joshua.

9. The holy spirit puts to rest any fears David may have concerning his future role. He had considered that Joseph – whom Moses had blessed as the *bechor shoro* (Deut. 33,17) as having assumed the role of the first born, since Reuben had become disqualified, might dispute David's title to the kingdom. Since, however, Elijah the prophet who is known to be the harbinger of the Messiah is on David's side, though he used to live in Gilead, part of Joseph's tribal territory, the holy spirit says *li gil-ad*, there is nothing to fear from that side.

If Menashe (who lives in Gilead) would supply the future king, Elijah would not have been on David's side.

Ephrayim, i.e. Joseph's other son who supplies the *mashiach ben Yoseph* will not interfere with David's domain, on the contrary, he will prepare the way for the Moshiach ben David.

ma-oz roshi – the possibility that another member of the tribe of Yehudah such as the original Yehudah, a different body would become the Messiah is also excluded, and the Psalmist says that *yehudah* will be my lawgiver, *mechokekai*, but "I will be the principal".

All this is clear from many scriptural passages such as Ezekiel 37,24 "My servant David will be king over them, a single shepherd for all of them". Also Ezekiel 34,24 "My servant David shall tend you, – he will be prince over you". The tradition that the name of the Messiah is *menachem* or *tzemach* is no contradiction to it being David, (Jerusalem Talmud Berachot 2,4), nor to the tradition that the Messiah was born on the same day the temple was destroyed, and that therefore he could not be the same body as Adam. (introduction Esther Rabbah 11)

10. To the possible argument that David might still harbour within

[11]Would that I were brought to the bastion! Would that I were led to Edom!
[12]But You have rejected us, O God; God, You do not march with our armies.
[13]Grant us Your aid against the foe, for the help of man is worthless.
[14]With God we shall triumph; He will trample our foes.

61 *For the leader; with instrumental music. Of David.*
[2]Hear my cry, O God, heed my prayer.

his character some remnant of the original *zuhama*, pollutant absorbed by Adam from the original serpent when he ate from the tree of knowledge, and that he could therefore NOT qualify as the Messiah, David replies that this could not be so.

"Moab has been my washbasin". Ruth my ancestor, who left the Moabite people and religion and converted to Judaism, has left behind any trace of the pollutant previously absorbed by Adam. It has become part of Moab's pollutants. (Baba Kama 38) For this reason, David is fit to assume the heritage of Adam. Should there be any guilt = *tum-ah*, impurity, that I have personally accumulated, says David, and which is unrelated to anyone in my background, and which sticks to me like a shoe to the heel, then I can cast that off on Edom".

This is similar to Isaiah 43,4 "I have exchanged men for you and put nations in your stead". The clear indication is that the Philistines, many of who I have killed, should by rights have triumphed over me, seeing I killed many of them, not Edom. (If I deserve exile, I should be in exile to the Philistines not to the Edomites)

11. However, this is a hint of things to come; He who will lead me in the future to the *ir matzor* the fortified city, is the one who has guided me to Edom now. My campaign against Edom had not even been planned. When I quarrelled, I contended with Aram Naharayim and Aram Tzovah whose lands are situated on a different border of Israel.

Who has guided me to Edom to slay there 18000 men on my way, and who has let Yoav slay another 12000 Edomites when he returned hom from his campaign against Aram? Surely this is a sign that G'd in the future will avenge Himself on Edom when bringing retribution to Amalek, something I have been chosen to execute.

This is meant by "who will lead me to the city causing trouble", i.e.

יא מִי יוֹבִלֵנִי עִיר מָצוֹר מִי נָחַנִי עַד-אֱדוֹם:
יב הֲלֹא-אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים זָנַחְתָּנוּ וְלֹא-תֵצֵא אֱלֹהִים
בְּצִבְאוֹתֵינוּ:
יג הָבָה-לָּנוּ עֶזְרַת מִצָּר וְשָׁוְא תְּשׁוּעַת אָדָם:
יד בֵּאלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה-חָיִל וְהוּא יָבוּס צָרֵינוּ:

סא א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-נְגִינַת לְדָוִד:
ב שְׁמְעָה אֱלֹהִים רִנָּתִי הַקְשִׁיבָה תְּפִלָּתִי:

Amalek's fortress, and will let it fall into my hands. It is the same G'd who has now guided me to Edom. (compare Devarim Rabbah 1,16 on the word *matzor*)

12. The holy spirit reflecting Israel's claim that G'd had forsaken it, says "Have You G'd not forsaken us and are not marching with our enemies?" "Why don't You redeem us"?

13. Should You G'd answer "what is wrong with being redeemed by means of a human being whom I have appointed for that task? Israel justifies its request because it wants redemption from its "real" enemy, i.e. *mitzar*, from the evil urge. Man as instrument of G'd's redemption is not adequate, in that respect, i.e. *shav*. We want that even the *yetzer hara* will become a tool in our efforts to serve the Lord! This requires that You pour Your spirit upon us from the celestial regions!

14. We will be able to do valiantly, *belokim*, by means of the holy angels our good deeds created; we will create those if You give us respite from our *tzor*, the evil urge! When we said *shav teshuat adam*, we meant that once You have removed the evil urge, there is no NEED, no use, i.e. *shav* for a redemption by our own hands; a human agent would be wasted.

Psalm 61

2. Our sages understand this Psalm as referring to Israel's condition in this present exile. Possibly, it expresses Israel's fears concerning this exile BEFORE it had begun, at a time when they were still living in Eretz Yisrael. They would then be saying: "please Lord hear my prayer while I am still on holy ground, a land that is particularly suited to address my prayers from".

3*From the end of the earth I call to You; when my heart is faint, You lead me to a rock that is high above me.*
4*For You have been my refuge, a tower of strength against the enemy.*
5*O that I might dwell in Your tent forever, take refuge under Your protecting wings.* Selah.
6*O God, You have heard my vows; grant the request of those who fear Your name.*

This is similar to our comment on Isaiah 65,24 "that before they call I will answer", namely the acceptance of prayer is subject to two distinctly different conditions. One of these conditions we have seen in operation when the Talmud relates how Rabbi Chiyah and his sons merely had to mention the fact that G'd makes the wind blow and the rain descend, and immediately the wind would start blowing and the rain would fall. (Baba Metzia 85) Although the request for rain is part of the central part of the *amidah* prayer, i.e. the 12 benedictions in which our requests from G'd are formulated, Rabbi Chiyah's as yet unformulated request was answered already.

The second important condition is that although, having answered the unspoken request, G'd might ignore the request when it is uttered, G'd so likes the prayer of the righteous that He listens and reacts to it.

Perhaps it is this kind of prayer that our Psalmist has in mind when he uses the term *rinah*. We know from Psalms 89,13 *beshimcha yerannenu*, they will jubilate in Your name, that *rinah* is a form of prayer extolling G'd's virtues in song.

Another example of that use of *rinah* is Psalms 118,5. From all this we learn that the verse in Kings I 8,28 *lishmo-a el harinah ve-el hatefillah* means that the temple is a site suitable for offering song to G'd. Also, that the *rinah* type of prayer has to precede the *tefillah* i.e. the prayer which represents our request from G'd.

The Psalmist here also requests that G'd first of all should hear his *shevachim*, praises. Afterwards, he says, "do listen to my requests, i.e. *tefillah*".

3. The Psalmist, representing the Jewish people, says "I present my prayer while I am still on holy soil, which is a preferred site for prayer. Do not tell me that only when I am at the end of the earth, i.e. in exile, I should pray for redemption. I know that prayer offered from a foreign land contaminated with the spirit of impurity has less chance of evoking a positive response. Do not tell me that since the

ג מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ אֵלֶיךָ אֶקְרָא בַּעֲטֹף לִבִּי בְּצוּר-יָרוּם
מִמֶּנִּי תַּנְחֵנִי:
ד כִּי-הָיִיתָ מַחְסֶה לִי מִגְדַּל-עֹז מִפְּנֵי אוֹיֵב:
ה אָגוּרָה בְאָהֳלְךָ עוֹלָמִים אֶחֱסֶה בְסֵתֶר כְּנָפֶיךָ סֶלָה:
ו כִּי-אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים שָׁמַעְתָּ לִנְדָרָי נָתַתָּ יְרֻשַּׁת יִרְאֵי
שְׁמֶךָ:

Shechinah will accompany me even in every exile, I need only to call on You from *ketzey ha-aretz*, the ends of the earth, and that You would hear. This is indeed so for two reasons. My heart will be weakened, *ba-atof libbi*, through the exile experience which results in a broken heart. 2) My prayer will not request that You terminate my exile, only that You guide me in such a way that the "rock" will be lifted from me. I am willing to pay for my sins through suffering exile; I only ask that exile be tolerable and not crush me like a rock.

4. If You were to be my *machasseh*, refuge, I would not need to go into exile under foreign kingdoms since You would be the tower of my strength, protecting me from the enemy.

5. Not only that, but if You were to lift the burden of the *yetzer hara* from me, You would also free me from the angel of death, i.e. I could dwell in Your tent *olamim* (plural), forever, i.e. in two worlds simultaneously. I would not need to experience physical death, since that is needed only to remove the last vestiges of the residual pollutant absorbed by man's body when Adam ate from the tree of knowledge. (Shabbat 55)

I would then be like Adam before the sin, who inhabited two worlds simultaneously. The word *ohel*, is understood like in Isaiah 40,22 "He stretched the skies like a tent to dwell in", i.e. the earth is Your tent.

Do not say that I would experience the same that Adam had experienced, i.e. the "fall", and that as a result he had to forego *tzel kenafecha* Your protective supervision, since his sin caused Your *Shechinah* to withdraw from earth to the *raki-ah*, the lowest layer of heaven.

I vow to conduct myself in such a way that I can forever i.e. *selah* take refuge under Your wings.

6. Do not say that this request is too demanding. You have accepted my vows in the past such as in Numbers 21,2–3. The result was that I conquered, took possession of the inheritance promised to the patriarchs, the *yirey shemecha*. The Psalmist in speaking about

[7]Add days to the days of the king; may his years extend through generations;
[8]may he dwell in God's presence forever; appoint steadfast love to guard him.
[9]So I will sing hymns to Your name forever, as I fulfill my vows day after day.

62 *For the leader; on Jeduthun. A psalm of David.*
[2]Truly my soul waits quietly for God; my deliverance comes from Him.
[3]Truly He is my rock and deliverance, my haven; I shall never be shaken.

"my vows" (plural), also has in mind Israel's *cherem* of the spoils captured in Jericho (Joshua 6,17). This was an instance when G'd enabled the conquest of the land in response to a vow which would only be made later. (possibly also Joshua chapter 24)

7. The freedom from the angel of death You have also granted to David, to whom though he had an original life expectancy of zero, (Rosh Hashanah 25) You have added a whole normal life span, freeing him from the clutches of the angel of death. He is compared there to the moon which always reappears each month. Israel wishes therefore, that its own life span be similarly subject to constant renewal.

8. The granting of this request would add glory to G'd, since, if the present conditions of exile and death would continue, and there will be many ruins, G'd's *Shechinah* would withdraw from earth. If You grant my request, Israel would dwell permanently in G'd's presence. Then the 3 pillars that are the foundation of our earth (Avot 1,2) will be preserved, namely Torah-Avodah and Gemilut chassadim. (Torah = *emet*, *gemilut chassadim* = *chessed*)

9. The third pillar, *avodah*, service of the Lord, i.e. the offering of sacrifices, will also be enhanced. The sacrifices will not be offered in order to atone for transgressions, but will represent freely made vows. I will be able to jubilate to Your name forever, as I pay my vows on a daily basis.

Another way of looking at verses 6–9 (briefly) is this. David refers to what Israel had said so far, and asks G'd to grant their requests just as He had listened to David's vows even before they had been uttered. David's wish to build the temple was one such instance. (Psalms 132,2)

ז יָמִים עַל-יְמֵי-מֶלֶךְ תּוֹסִיף שְׁנוֹתָיו כְּמוֹ-דֹר וָדֹר:
ח יֵשֵׁב עוֹלָם לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת מַן יְנַצְּרֵהוּ:
ט כֵּן אֲזַמְּרָה שִׁמְךָ לָעַד לְשַׁלְּמִי נְדָרַי יוֹם יוֹם:

סב

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-יְדוּתוּן מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:
ב אַךְ אֶל-אֱלֹהִים דּוֹמִיָּה נַפְשִׁי מִמֶּנּוּ יְשׁוּעָתִי:
ג אַךְ-הוּא צוּרִי וְיִשׁוּעָתִי מִשְׂגַּבִּי לֹא-אֶמּוֹט רַבָּה:

David says *li-nedaray* to my vows (plural) instead of *nidri*, (singular for my vow). He means "You have granted me life in order that I should make such vows". This is why You gave "an inheritance to those who revere Your name".

The reason G'd cannot grant this request is that He wants the earth eventually to be able to endure even when measured only by the yardstick of *din*, justice, i.e. by the attribute of *elokim*.

When that happens, one can truly jubilate to G'd, celebrating mankind's, respectively Israel's, ultimate achievement.

Psalm 62

1. Possibly, the holy spirit has inspired Yeduthun at the same time as it inspired David. (compare Chronicles I 25,1–3)

2. The purpose of this hymn is to teach man that there is a G'd who is active on earth, and who is the only power who can accomplish outstanding achievements, who performs a lot of kind deeds, and who alone deserves that man puts his trust into. One cannot put one's trust in anyone made of flesh and blood. When in distress, only G'd listens, trying to plead with a human ruler is useless. Jeremiah 17,5, already curses people who mistakenly place their trust in fellow human beings. Not only does such a person not achieve his physical good, he corrupts his soul in the process.

Even when it appears that a human ruler has acceded to one's plea, – this is only because G'd assisted somehow. The word *ach*, as usual, is used diminutively, meaning "to anyone *ach*, except G'd, my soul should remain silent, unresponsive". *mimenu yeshuati*, my salvation comes only from Him, even if channelled through a human being.

3. He alone is my rock, i.e. protects me against troubles, *vi-*

[4]How long will all of you attack a man, to crush him, as though he were a leaning wall, a tottering fence?
[5]They lay plans to topple him from his rank; they delight in falsehood; they bless with their mouths, while inwardly they curse. Selah.
[6]Truly, wait quietly for God, O my soul, for my hope comes from Him.

yeshuati and my salvation IF troubles come my way. Once He has extricated me from troubles, *misgavi*, He elevates me, ensures that I do not totter greatly. This means that unless I accumulate many sins, He will not let me totter. My soul can be calm, *dumi-yah*, in that knowledge.

4. The Psalmist asks how long, – to what extent do you humble yourself before a human being, i.e. on account of fear from a human being *al ish*? The implication is that you overrate the value and ability of *ish* a highly placed human being. The word *al* is used as "beside" i.e. *al yad hayarden*, next to the river Jordan, (Numbers 13,29) or as in *al mateh menashe*, next to the tribe of Menashe (Numbers 2,20).

How long will you continue your foolish ways of pleading with a human authority to grant you relief? You will "murder" yourself *terotzchu kulchem*, you will bring a curse on yourselves, as per Jeremiah 17,5.

Relying on man is equivalent to departing from G'd (ibid). This man you put your trust in, is nothing more than a *kir natuy*, a wall already leaning, about to collapse, a fence that has been pushed aside with ease.

If a miracle occurs and you are helped by such a human ruler, it is at the expense of any merits you may have accumulated previously.

If you flatter the ruler's greatness too much, he will not want to admit that he is unable to help you even if he wanted to, but will stall you in order for you to maintain this flattering image of him. It would have been better for you not to flatter him, at least he would have admitted his impotence to help you, and you would not have humbled yourself but would have turned to G'd for help.

5. Don't you know that others, – instead of appealing to such a ruler and humbling themselves to secure his help, – plot to topple him from his lofty position? (this is evident from the use of the word *ach*) These people are more intelligent than you, since they prefer to hear his *kazav*, lie, – saying that he is unable to help them, (when he may mean he is unwilling) – and they accept this at face value. Instead of

ד עַד-אָנָה תְּהוֹתְתוּ עַל-אִישׁ תְּרָצְּחוּ כֻלְּכֶם כְּקִיר נָטוּי
גָּדֵר הַדְּחוּיָה:
ה אַךְ מִשְּׂאֵתוֹ יָעֲצוּ לְהַדִּיחַ יִרְצוּ כָזָב בְּפִיו יְבָרֵכוּ
וּבְקִרְבָּם יְקַלְלוּ-סֶלָה:
ו אַךְ לֵאלֹהִים דּוֹמִי נַפְשִׁי כִּי-מִמֶּנּוּ תִקְוָתִי:

relying on him, they turn their attention to a higher power, i.e. G'd.

They bless the human ruler with their lips for having disabused them of false hopes immediately instead of wearing them out with false hopes. However, in their hearts, they curse him. At any rate, whether one flatters such rulers or does not, the fact remains that they do not help and that appeals to them are futile. The longer and more insistently one appeals to humans as a source of salvation, the greater the disrespect displayed for G'd as the true source of salvation.

6. Having described how much better it is to put one's faith in G'd rather than in a human being, the Psalmist addresses himself to the REASON man seeks out another human being to help him. This is due to the fact that mutual dialogue is perceived as possible only with someone else who is visible, with one's peers. When one turns to G'd, the conversation seems to be one sided, since He does not respond in so many words. Man does not appreciate what the factors are that create the barrier to his dialogue with G'd, i.e. his sins. It is only because of those that G'd APPEARS to be unresponsive.

People do not realize that they first need to mend their ways.

The Psalmist therefore, – as if addressing his own heart – says "when I said to you (my soul) that you should remain silent and offer your prayer only to G'd and help would be forthcoming immediately because *mimenu tikvati*, my hope is only from Him, it does not work quite as simply as this."

G'd is not to be put to a test in such a fashion that if He does not respond to you in a recognizable manner right away you would begin to question His ways and ability, and turn to man instead.

You must ask Him only matters pertaining to your soul, i.e. to help you to rehabilitate your soul, that He should forgive your sins, and place your account with Him in a positive balance. You need to do this, for in the end only from Him is there any hope that your wishes will be granted, i.e. the wishes of your BODY.

[7]*He is my rock and deliverance, my haven; I shall not be shaken.*
[8]*I rely on God, my deliverance and glory, my rock of strength; in God is my refuge.*
[9]*Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts before Him; God is our refuge.* Selah.
[10]*Men are mere breath; mortals, illusion; placed on a scale all together, they weigh even less than a breath.*

7. But, – says the soul, what shall I answer my heart when it wants to know that having remained silent and called only on G'd, when will He answer me? – when is G'd my rock and elevates me above my perils so that I do not totter? The answer is that this will be so only after the heart has cleansed itself from sin. THEN He answers even before the prayers have been properly formulated. In such an event, the Psalmist does not only say (as in verse 3) "I WILL NOT TOTTER GREATLY", but "I WILL NOT TOTTER AT ALL".

Verse 3 described a situation when the supplicant's merits outweigh his debits; verse 8 describes the *tzaddik gamur*, totally righteous person.

8. Now, when there are NO impediments from my side, my salvation will arrive promptly. My salvation is up to G'd to provide, i.e. *al elokim*; He has to respond because of my honour. All this if I do NOT use a human intermediary to secure His help, but rely on Him exclusively.

9. So far, the Psalmist discussed individuals praying for help and pointed out that sins committed by the individual praying for help may prove to be an obstacle preventing immediate response to such prayers. Individuals are examined for their worthiness or unworthiness before G'd turns to their prayers. Now the Psalmist addresses himself to congregational prayer. In the case of communal prayer, G'd does not examine each individual on his or her merits before responding to their collective prayers. This is why the Psalmist says *bechol eyt-am*, the people can pray, i.e. plead for help to the "body" at all times.

For as in Job 34,17, "would You condemn the just – O Mighty One"?

A multitude can face G'd with confidence at any time. This is also what the Zohar (1,234) comments on Psalms 102,18, i.e. that G'd turns to the prayer of the individual and examines if he is worthy of a positive response or not. However, when a multitude turns to G'd in prayer, He does not despise their prayer.

אַךְ-הוּא צוּרִי וְיִשׁוּעָתִי מִשְׂגַּבִּי לֹא אֶמּוֹט:
עַל-אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁעִי וּכְבוֹדִי צוּר-עֻזִּי מַחְסִי בֵּאלֹהִים:
בְּטְחוּ בוֹ בְכָל-עֵת עָם שִׁפְכוּ-לְפָנָיו לִבַּבְכֶם אֱלֹהִים מַחֲסֶה-לָּנוּ סֶלָה:
אַךְ הֶבֶל בְּנֵי-אָדָם כָּזָב בְּנֵי-אִישׁ בְּמֹאזְנַיִם לַעֲלוֹת הֵמָּה מֵהֶבֶל יָחַד:

This is the meaning of the Talmud Yevamot 105, on Isaiah 55,6 "seek the Lord when He is likely to be found" on the one hand, and Deut. 4,7 "whenever we call upon Him".

We read there that even decrees formulated by G'd can be overturned by collective prayer, as opposed to prayer by individuals.

Individual prayer requires *et ratzon*, a time of goodwill, to be heard, collective prayer on the other hand is always effective, i.e. *bitchu bo bechol eyt.*

Nonetheless, you must not imagine that prayer without having submitted to G'd's will can be effective, rather *shifchu lefanav levavchem*, pour out your hearts before Him.

Another reason the Psalmist adds this is so that we should not think that the REASON that G'd responds to congregational power is the fact that MANY people pray together. It is not the numbers that matter, but the state of mind, i.e. *levavchem.* Pour out BOTH your hearts, *levavchem*, plural, your evil urge must humble itself also. When these conditions have been met, then *elokim machasseh lanu selah*, even the attribute of justice will be refuge for us forever.

10. The same assurance does not apply to the gentile nations. The generations from Adam to Noach were dependent on Adam's merit, and they are known as *beney adam*, Adam's line. The generation from Noach to Abraham were dependent on Noach's merit and were known as Noach's line. The former did not escape the deluge due to Adam's merits, nor the latter the dispersal at the time they had built the tower. (Genesis 11,1)

Only the patriarchs i.e. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's merits were of such calibre that it protected their descendants from wholesale punishment.

Abraham reportedly said to G'd that he did not want the covenant made with him to be superseded like the covenant made with Adam had been superseded by that made with Noach, and as Noach's covenant with G'd was being superseded by that made now with him.

[11]*Do not trust in violence, or put false hopes in robbery; if force bears fruit pay it no mind.*
[12]*One thing God has spoken; two things have I heard; that might belongs to God,*
[13]*and faithfulness is Yours, O LORD, to reward each man according to his deeds.*

63 *A psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah.*

This is what is meant by ***ach hevel beney adam, kazav beney ish***, the word *ish* referring to Noach who is described in Genesis 6,9, as *ish tzaddik*.

G'd will be a refuge for US ***selah***, i.e. THIS covenant is NOT subject to being superseded. The Psalmist says that this *am*, nation, i.e. the Jewish people, the descendants of the patriarchs can rely on Him, i.e. on this covenant for all future times.

Those who related only to Adam and Noach, i.e. ***beney adam***or ***beney ish*** are not building on enduring foundations. The word ***kazav*** always means something that ultimately does not endure, disappoints him who puts faith in it. (compare Kings II 4,16 when the Shunamite woman begs Elisha not to grant her a son – if he would die prematurely. She would then only feel betrayed, i.e. ***al techazev beshifchatech***) Another example would be Jeremiah 15,18 "like waters that disappoint and are not to be relied on".

If put on a scale, the merits of Adam or Noach would rise, ***bemoznayim la-a-lot***, would not be enough to tip the scales to earn their generations permanent existence even *yachad* in a generation when they maintain unity, such as when they built the tower.

11. When I asked you to trust in G'd at all times all together, there is one condition for successful prayer, namely that you are not guilty of violence, oppression and robbery, as we read in Isaiah 54,14 "keep away from oppression and you will have nought to fear". Once you are free from those sins, and are united, you need not pay attention even if you observe the wicked being successful and about to threaten you.

12. Concerning my statement that even the ***midat hadin***, attribute of justice will prove to be a permanent refuge for you, this may seem strange. When G'd spoke at Sinai, – I heard two words simultaneously, i.e. ***shamor*** and ***zachor*** concerning the Sabbath legislation.

יא אַל-תִּבְטְחוּ בְעֹשֶׁק וּבְגָזֵל אַל-תֶּהְבָּלוּ חַיִל כִּי-יָנוּב
אַל-תָּשִׁיתוּ לֵב:
יב אַחַת דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהִים שְׁתַּיִם-זוּ שָׁמָעְתִּי כִּי-עֹז לֵאלֹהִים:
יג וְלְךָ-אֲדֹנָי חָסֶד כִּי-אַתָּה תְּשַׁלֵּם לְאִישׁ כְּמַעֲשֵׂהוּ:

סג

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד בִּהְיוֹתוֹ בְּמִדְבַּר יְהוּדָה:

Just as these two statements were said by G'd simultaneously, (compare the versions of the 10 commandments in Exodus and Deuteronomy respectively) so *hashem* and *elokim* are but 2 sides of the same "coin", for He is *oz*, is representative of both *midat hadin* and *midat harachamim*. The idea that these two attributes operate completely independently of one another is not true. Each attribute contains an element of the other, also.

13. Not only that, – even when the attribute of justice is predominant, *chessed*, a greater degree of tolerance than *rachamim* mercy is also present in a limited degree. This is because You pay everyone in accordance with their deeds.

This means that a person who has performed deeds of loving kindness – even though guilty of the most heinous crimes – is deserving of a degree of compensating consideration regarding those acts of loving kindness he has performed.

By the same token, a blameless conduct can expect to find recognition by the attribute of justice.

Psalm 63

1. The purpose of this hymn is to extol the advantage enjoyed by a Jew who lives in Eretz Yisrael, the holy land, even if such a Jew is forced to be exiled from place to place within the land of Israel. It is good to thank the Lord who has enabled exiled people to remain under the protective wings of His *Shechinah*, which is present throughout the land of Israel, and the protection of which is not available, usually, in the diaspora.

Secondly, seeing that G'd has shown Himself as liking you by allowing you to reside in Israel, and your soul cleaves to Him, your

[2]God, You are my God; I search for You, my soul thirsts for You, my body yearns for You, as a parched and thirsty land that has no water.
[3]I shall behold You in the sanctuary, and see Your might and glory,
[4]Truly Your faithfulness is better than life; my lips declare Your praise.

body too should look only to G'd for succour, even if it happens to be afflicted. Your body, even if stricken, should rejoice with its Creator, be happy that G'd loves his person.

Since David is in flight from the threat of death, does not *mizmor*, a joyful hymn seem somewhat strange at this time? Should we not expect a lament from David at such a time? This is why David first tells us that we must keep our perspective. First and foremost, we must know that anyone who resides outside Eretz Yisrael is deemed not to have G'd, i.e. not to be under Divine protection. (Ketuvot 110) This is expressed by "happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the land of the living even if they are fleeing".

When David had to flee outside the land of Israel, (Samuel I 26,19) he had described that flight as an expulsion, "they have driven me out this day so that I cannot share in the inheritance of the Lord, they said go and serve other gods". Clearly, serving the Lord in the diaspora cannot be compared to serving the Lord in the land of Israel.

For this reason, – in our Psalm – David is grateful to find himself in the desert of Yehudah rather than beyond the boundaries of the holy land, even though he is in a desert.

2. The reason – David says – is that "You remain my G'd", as distinct from what You would have been to me if I had to take refuge outside when my enemies would have said that I no longer enjoy G'd's protection.

Better to have even the *midat hadin*, attribute of justice, i.e. *elokim* supervising me inside the holy land, even while fleeing for one's life, than not to be under G'd's *hashgachah*, personal supervision.

The proof that I am still under G'd's supervision though fleeing for my life is that the holy spirit which requires the presence of a clear and serene mind still comes over me, ***ashacharecka***, I still enjoy Your sense, and I thirst for You, something that does not happen outside the land of Israel. This proves to me that You G'd still care about me and have not abandoned me because I remain in Eretz Yisrael.

ב אֱלֹהִים אֵלִי אַתָּה אֲשַׁחֲרֶךָּ צָמְאָה לְךָ נַפְשִׁי כָּמַה לְךָ
בְשָׂרִי בְּאֶרֶץ-צִיָּה וְעָיֵף בְּלִי-מָיִם:
ג כֵּן בַּקֹּדֶשׁ חֲזִיתִךָ לִרְאוֹת עֻזְּךָ וּכְבוֹדֶךָ:
ד כִּי-טוֹב חַסְדְּךָ מֵחַיִּים שְׂפָתַי יְשַׁבְּחוּנָךְ:

Though my soul is keenly aware of all this, and one might think that my flesh yearns for You in a parched land and grows weary without water, and that my body will become unable to be the proper vessel for Your holy spirit, this is not so. My body is eager to absorb Your spirit as a parched piece of land is eager to absorb water, and even while facing death, this is of secondary significance as long as Your holy spirit is with me.

3. One may still wonder how it is possible that the degree of holy spirit David enjoys is equal to what he used to enjoy while with the prophet Samuel or in Nov. (Samuel I 19,18)

Maybe the visions of G'd i.e. ***machazey shaddai*** that David sees now are of an inferior level, appropriate to the nature of the terrain in which David finds himself? The Psalmist says that this is not so. When he had said ***ashacharecka***, he meant that his visions were of the same quality that he used to enjoy ***bekodesh chaziticha***, when I saw You while on hallowed ground.

Should someone say that if this is so, what is all the ***tzom-ah nafshi komah besari*** about, since you have not been deprived of anything? David answers that here in the desert he can only see ***kevodcha***, Your glory not ***uzcha***, Your "might". The Torah is called ***oz*** as we know from ***hashem oz le– ammo yiten*** (Psalms 29,11), see our commentary there, where we suggested that one of the meanings of ***oz*** could be ***emet*** = Torah. Hence "my thirst ***tzam-ah*** is that I want to see both ***kevodcha*** and ***uzcha***.

4. When I have said in verse 2 that my body is primarily yearning for You, – ignoring its own impending death due to lack of water, – this is something which must sound astonishing. The death that my body prefers to life is not death at the hands of my enemy but death from natural causes, such as the lack of water. Concerning SUCH a death, I have said ***tov chassdecha michayim***, better Your kindness than life itself, since my body knows no greater privilege than to praise You. The fact that You accept praises from me is a compliment worth more than life itself. Since it has been so inspired, why should I be saddened by the absence of water, says David.

[5]*I bless You all my life; I lift up my hands, invoking Your name.*
[6]*I am sated as with a rich feast, I sing praises with joyful lips* [7]*when I call You to mind upon my bed, when I think of You in the watches of the night;*
[8]*for You are my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I shout for joy.*
[9]*My soul is attached to You; Your right hand supports me.*
[10]*May those who seek to destroy my life enter the depths of the earth.*
[11]*May they be gutted by the sword; may they be prey to jackals.*

5–6. One may still wonder how David could elevate his body to such a spiritual level?! David replies that he does not view his body as something independent of his personality. We are reminded of what the Talmud in Ketuvot 104 relates about the time Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi was about to die. At that time, Rabbi Yehudah raised his ten fingers and said to G'd: "You know that I have not used this world for bodily gratifications, only for the gratification of my soul". In that way, also his body had become sanctified. This teaches that a person can perform all those physical activities which afford him pleasure, even sexual intercourse, by having a higher purpose in mind. When he does so, he thereby sanctifies his body. David says here "I raise my hands because they are dedicated to Your name". Having said how his flesh yearns for G'd, he explains by this statement how this is possible.

7. Another proof of the close interaction of my body and soul, is the fact that when I lie down at night when I recite the prayer "I place my spirit in Your hand", I ONLY mention my spirit. (Psalms 31,6) I ONLY think of You, ***be-ashmurot eh-geh bach***, when the spirit comes to, my lips whisper of their own accord, ***sifsey renanot yehallel pi***. All this is due to my body being so closely aligned with my spirit. My body has been affected, ***hushpa*** by my spirit.

8. We have stated at the beginning of this Psalm that the hymn revolves around two themes, 1) to teach the advantage of living on the soil of Eretz Yisrael, and that therefore David praises G'd for having been a refugee in the desert of Yehudah instead of in foreign lands beyond the boundaries of the holy land. At least while in Eretz Yisrael he could be described as having G'd watch over him.

ה כֵּן אֲבָרֶכְךָ בְחַיָּי בְּשִׁמְךָ אֶשָּׂא כַפָּי:
ו כְּמוֹ חֵלֶב וָדֶשֶׁן תִּשְׂבַּע נַפְשִׁי וְשִׂפְתֵי רְנָנוֹת יְהַלֶּל-
פִּי:
ז אִם-זְכַרְתִּיךָ עַל-יְצוּעָי בְּאַשְׁמֻרוֹת אֶהְגֶּה-בָּךְ:
ח כִּי-הָיִיתָ עֶזְרָתָה לִּי וּבְצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ אֲרַנֵּן:
ט דָּבְקָה נַפְשִׁי אַחֲרֶיךָ בִּי תָמְכָה יְמִינֶךָ:
י וְהֵמָּה לְשׁוֹאָה יְבַקְשׁוּ נַפְשִׁי יָבֹאוּ בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת הָאָרֶץ:
יא יַגִּירֻהוּ עַל-יְדֵי-חָרֶב מְנָת שֻׁעָלִים יִהְיוּ:

The second theme is that not only his spirit but also his body is constantly yearning for G'd. Here, David goes into greater detail about what had only been captioned in verse 2 *tzamah nafshi, komah lecha besari.*

He gives thanks to G'd for 2 distinct acts of kindness. 1) You have been my help against my enemies. 2) The help You extended was NOT that I had to flee the country in order to survive, but *betzeyl kenafecha aranen*, I remain under the wings of Your *Shechinah*, enabling me to rejoice. This I could not have done outside Eretz Yisrael.

9. My soul cleaved to You, i.e. it must be assumed to have departed my body. However, *bi*, by me, by my body Your right hand has supported me, i.e. my soul did not have to leave my body in order to express its attachment to You. Since my flesh expressed such affinity for You, You have suffused it with sanctity. Your SUPPORT i.e. *tamcha bi*, enabled me to keep my soul within my body all through this yearning and thirsting for You.

10. On the other hand, Saul and his men want to achieve *shoah=shiy* an elevation by death of my soul. (Saul wants to insure the succession of his son to the throne) (compare Job 20,6 for *shoah=shiy*)

They will, however, achieve the very opposite; instead of being elevated, they will wind up in the lowest parts of earth.

11. The holy spirit takes over and says – whereas David was considerate and said that his enemies would wind up in the most inferior positions on earth, but alive, – it will NOT be so. Rather, since they have forced David to become a stranger, have deprived him of his home, using the threat of the sword, – they themselves will wind

[12]But the king shall rejoice in God; all who swear by Him shall exult, when the mouth of liars is stopped.

64 *For the leader. A psalm of David.*
[2]Hear my voice, O God, when I plead; guard my life from the enemy's terror.
[3]Hide me from a band of evil men, from a crowd of evildoers,
[4]who whet their tongues like swords; they aim their arrows—cruel words—

up as prey for the foxes, i.e. they will die and end up like foxes in the ruins and the deserts. It will be THEY who wind up in the deserts.

12. After their death, the king, i.e. David will rejoice in G'd, i.e. the attribute of justice, seeing his afflictions have been removed.

Another meaning of verses 11 and 12. – Our sages have explained that after David had killed Goliath, when David's persecution had started, Saul had been worried whether he was the offspring of the house of Peretz or Zerach. (both from the tribe of Yehudah, from his union with Tamar). If David were to be descended from the former, there was danger to Saul's throne, since Peretz traditionally was to supply the kings of Yehudah from whom the Messiah would stem.

Doeg, trying to calm Saul, had questioned David's legitimacy as a Jew rather than his qualifications as a contender for the throne. This because David had been descended from the Moabite Ruth, a people whom the Torah had expressly excluded from supplying proselytes.

However, Doeg's arguments had been rejected by Yitra the Israelite (or Ishaelite) who insisted that only Moabite men could not become proselytes, and that David's legitimacy as a Jew was beyond question. He had quoted the prophet Samuel himself on the subject. (Yevamot 76–77) When David could not be eliminated by legal means as possible future contender to the throne, Saul and his men began to persecute him. G'd was angered on two counts. 1) That the council had only accepted Yitra's ruling (Samuel's) when Yitra had threateningly drawn his sword. (compare Talmud 2) That even after David's legitimacy had been established, they still pursued him, i.e. after he had been recognized as a proselyte *yagiruhu*, by the sword.

This is why they will not only wind up in the lowliest positions on earth, but will also become the prey of the foxes, i.e. in desolate places. We know from Lamentations 5,18, that foxes are found in ruins, in places that have become desolate.

יא וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִשְׂמַח בֵּאלֹהִים יִתְהַלֵּל כָּל-הַנִּשְׁבָּע בּוֹ כִּי
יִסָּכֵר פִּי דוֹבְרֵי-שָׁקֶר׃

סד א לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד׃
ב שְׁמַע-אֱלֹהִים קוֹלִי בְשִׂיחִי מִפַּחַד אוֹיֵב תִּצֹּר חַיָּי׃
ג תַּסְתִּירֵנִי מִסּוֹד מְרֵעִים מֵרִגְשַׁת פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן׃
ד אֲשֶׁר שָׁנְנוּ כַחֶרֶב לְשׁוֹנָם דָּרְכוּ חִצָּם דָּבָר מָר׃

The punishment fits, since just as foxes are devious, deceive, so David's pursuers were devious in their ways. When they insulted David, they did not only insult him, but also Boaz who had married Ruth and converted her.

Boaz, – in retrospect would have regretted his self imposed restraint when Ruth had been in his barn and he had not slept with her. (compare Vayikra Rabbah 23,11) If marrying Ruth subsequently had been illegal – because she could not be converted, why did he have to restrain himself?

Once these enemies will have become foxes' prey, – the words "AND the king will rejoice", mean that it is a source of satisfaction for David AND Boaz. It is in order for them to wait until David would be installed as king for that satisfaction, since G'd too had "suffered". The *nishba bo* who will jubilate, refers to Boaz who had restrained his biological urges by denying himself an oath. Those who had spoken lies, *dovray sheker* had claimed that Moabite women too could not become proselytes were silenced, i.e. *yissocher pi* "This will become the catalyst for *yithallel kol hanishba.*

Psalm 64

2. Even if You G'd do not respond to my prayer BEFORE I formulate it, – as we have described in connection with Isaiah 65,24, AT LEAST listen to my conversation, plea, since my soul is oppressed because of the enemy who threatens my life. *sichi* conversation, because I cannot wait till I can pray to You with proper concentration. *titzor chayay*, guard my life!

3. There are two categories of evil doers. There are those who harbour evil thoughts secretly, and who plan to execute their evil designs at an appropriate time. There is a second category. Those who are unable to conceal their wicked plans, but they sharpen their tongues immediately, and they give advance notice of their evil

5to shoot from hiding at the blameless man; they shoot him suddenly and without fear.
6They arm themselves with an evil word; when they speak, it is to conceal traps; they think, "Who will see them?"
7Let the wrongdoings they have concealed, each one inside him, his secret thoughts, be wholly exposed.
8God shall shoot them with arrows; they shall be struck down suddenly.
9Their tongue shall be their downfall; all who see them shall recoil in horror;
10all men shall stand in awe; they shall proclaim the work of God and His deed which they perceived.
11The righteous shall rejoice in the LORD, and take refuge in Him; all the upright shall exult.

designs. The first category is the more dangerous. The second group of enemies may cool off after having given vent to their hatred orally. The first group is much more terrifying. David therefore asks G'd to "hide me from the wicked who keep their plan a secret, who meet in secret and plan their evil deeds".

4. This verse discusses the second group who have sharpened their tongues openly. David is not that much afraid of them, since most of their threats are merely oral, i.e. *davar mar*. Their anger exhausts itself in bitter words, they do not take the law into their own hands.

5. Those who shoot the innocent, *tam*, out of secret hiding places, they are the ones I am afraid of, says David. They have no fear of being hit themselves because they remain in hiding. One cannot hide from people whose aggressive intentions one is not even aware of. Their potential victims are not on guard.

6. Another reason the first group is more dangerous is, since even if the victim is killed, it is the second group who will be considered responsible, seeing they had advertised their evil intention towards the victim all over the place. Even if the second group will begin to plan their ambush in secret, their victims will remain on guard knowing what to expect in view of the hatred that had been uttered orally. They will take care not to be seen, and out of fear that suspicion rests on them they may not even carry out their plan for fear of being discovered.

7. Not so the first group. They will endeavour to cover their

ה לִירוֹת בַּמִּסְתָּרִים תָּם פִּתְאֹם יֹרֶהוּ וְלֹא יִירָאוּ׃
ו יְחַזְּקוּ-לָמוֹ דָּבָר רָע יְסַפְּרוּ לִטְמוֹן מוֹקְשִׁים אָמְרוּ מִי
יִרְאֶה-לָּמוֹ׃
ז יַחְפְּשׂוּ-עוֹלֹת תַּמְנוּ חֵפֶשׂ מְחֻפָּשׂ וְקֶרֶב אִישׁ וְלֵב
עָמֹק׃
ח וַיֹּרֵם אֱלֹהִים חֵץ פִּתְאוֹם הָיוּ מַכֹּתָם׃
ט וַיַּכְשִׁילֻהוּ עָלֵימוֹ לְשׁוֹנָם יִתְנוֹדְדוּ כָּל-רֹאֵה בָם׃
י וַיִּירְאוּ כָּל-אָדָם וַיַּגִּידוּ פֹּעַל אֱלֹהִים וּמַעֲשֵׂהוּ
הִשְׂכִּילוּ׃
יא יִשְׂמַח צַדִּיק בַּיהוָה וְחָסָה בוֹ וְיִתְהַלְלוּ כָּל-יִשְׁרֵי-לֵב׃

tracks, *yechapsu olot tamnu*, so thoroughly, that even when their foul deed has been perpetrated it would not occur to anyone to suspect THEM as the authors of the crime even after the most thorough investigation.

8. Their secretiveness is so successful that even if G'd were to strike them dead suddenly – no one would view this as an act of retribution for their foul deeds, since no one had ever suspected them. A *midah keneged midah* punishment would not even be recognized as such.

9. Not only that, but the onlookers would be misled to regard the sudden death of the murderers as a mishap. The *chetz*, arrow which had been the instrument of *midah keneged midah*, punishment fitting the crime, for what their evil tongues had planned, would be misinterpreted even though it represented the fitting retribution.

Alternately, – the Psalmist predicts that Divine retribution will lay bare what the murderers had done and how they had planned it, since their tongues would betray them, just as it had betrayed the prophet Bileam.

Then, when they would receive their punishment, *makkotam*, everyone will look on them and be moved, i.e. will realize that what they had witnessed had been an act of Divine retribution.

10. As a result, people will become afraid to plot in this fashion. They will declare openly that G'd had been at work, and they will understand His actions, i.e. that He makes the punishment fit the crime.

11. The holy spirit replies, saying that the *tzaddik* should rejoice

65 *For the leader, A psalm of David. A song.*
2Praise befits You in Zion, O God; vows are paid to You;
3all mankind comes to You, You who hear prayer.
4When all manner of sins overwhelm me, it is You who forgive our iniquities.

with G'd, – without worrying too much about how the perpetrators of evil will receive their punishment or will appear to go scot free in this life.

The *tzaddik* must trust in G'd, believe that He is faithful. G'd promises that He will act in a manner that enables all *yishrey lev*, sincere hearted people to praise Him even if they see the wicked flourish and the righteous suffer. All this is so because G'd does NOT waive His right to exact retribution, and he will repay the *yishrey lev* with great reward for their faith in the future, because they said "we are happy not to have doubted the way G'd conducts His affairs".

Psalm 65

1. When a human king experiences the adulation of his subjects in song and poetry, he feels elated and obligated to respond in a visible manner to such tributes. The same does NOT hold true when we praise the Lord. On the contrary, WE need to be grateful that we have been considered worthy to acclaim G'd in song. This is the meaning of *ledavid shir*, David is grateful to be allowed to present a song.

2. Vis a vis You o G'd, silence is the essence of praise. This is so, since what man can be arrogant enough to presume to praise the Lord adequately? After all, man is only like dust and ashes before Him!

This is true not only vis a vis G'd's most exalted manifestation, whose attribute does not even relate to Zion, but even to those Divine emanations that manifest themselves on earth through their presence in Zion, i.e. *elokim betziyon*. Even such manifestations are beyond our ability to praise adequately. Since this is so, how can we serve G'd in such a way that Your goodwill towards us is visible?

Therefore, the Psalmist says *u-lecha yeshulam neder*, – by the payment of freely vowed vows. The purpose of these offerings is not to secure a personal audience with G'd during which demands would be made, unlike the subjects of a human king, whose lowliest subject offers gifts in order to secure a hearing.

In our case, who would have the audacity to demand an audience from the king of kings?

Or, – these verses have a different meaning altogether. David says

סה א לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד שִׁיר:
ב לְךָ דֻמִיָּה תְהִלָּה אֱלֹהִים בְּצִיּוֹן וּלְךָ יְשֻׁלַּם-נֶדֶר:
ג שֹׁמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה עָדֶיךָ כָּל-בָּשָׂר יָבֹאוּ:
ד דִּבְרֵי עֲוֹנֹת גָּבְרוּ מֶנִּי פְּשָׁעֵינוּ אַתָּה תְכַפְּרֵם:

that there are three matters which escape his understanding. 1) Considering G'd's majesty and grandeur, the only praise of Him should be silent awe and admiration. How could anyone dare approach G'd in dialogue? Nonetheless, David says "You Yourself have ASKED for our prayers"!! 2) The very fact of G'd being in Zion, (on earth) is mind boggling! Can G'd really dwell on earth?

3) What possible point can there be in paying vows in the form of sacrifices, since everything is Yours anyways?! The meaning of *u-lecha yeshulam neder* means "can something that is Yours be used to pay a vow?"

3. This verse answers all three of David's queries. 1) The value of your prayer consists of the fact that the whole of mankind receives benefits from your prayer. As a result, *adecha kol bassar yavo-u*, Your esteem is raised so much that all flesh will come to You.

When you do not offer prayer, this is simply not so. In other words, the condition for G'd to hear what is in your mind is that you pray. Then *shomea tefillah.* (It is not what it does for Him, but what it does for you)

4. Another reason is that there are two categories of sin which cannot be atoned for by offering sacrifices, whereas prayer does help to expiate these sins, just as it helped King Hezzekiah. (Berachot 10) These sins are 1) Desecration (public) of the holy name of G'd. 2) Sins committed as acts of insurrection against G'd, i.e. *pesha.*

There are instances when even intentionally committed sins, *avon* can be atoned for by certain sacrifices such as *korban asham* for false oaths etc. Concerning both these groups of sins, David says *divrey avonot* etc. Concerning desecration of the Lord's name, he says *divrey avonot gavru mimeni*, those knowingly committed sins which have become too great for me, that overwhelm me. Also for our *pesha-im* as a rule, whether perpetrated by me or someone else, You grant atonement through prayer. The most severe of all sins is *chillul hashem*, desecration of the Lord's name. A classic example is cited in the Talmud Yuma 86. Rav describes that if he were to enter a butcher shop, buy some meat without offering immediate cash payment, he would be guilty of that sin, since the onlookers would

5Happy is the man You choose and bring near to dwell in Your courts; may we be sated with the blessings of Your house, Your holy temple.
6Answer us with victory through awesome deeds, O God, our deliverer, in whom all the ends of the earth and the distant seas put their trust;
7who by His power fixed the mountains firmly, who is girded with might,

conclude that he had exploited his position of prominence in the city to obtain this meat for free, i.e. that he had used his religious position for personal advantage.

Naturally, the same conduct by lesser individuals would not be considered *chillul hashem* at all.

David compares his own position in the nation to the one described in the Talmud by Rav. The people's reaction to any sin of David's would immediately stamp such sin with the stigma of being *chillul hashem*. This is why he says *divrey avonot*, the sins committed merely by the uttering of certain words *gavru meni* would overwhelm me, be beyond my ability to cope with. Still, You enable even such sins to be atoned for by prayer! The praise of the Lord is really best expressed by *dumiah*, silence as a sign of one's inadequacy.

But when it comes to prayer for forgiveness, we are certainly NOT to remain silent.

5. In response to David's second query i.e. how G'd could possibly reside on earth, the Psalmist says "happy he whom You bring close to dwell in Your courtyards." This means that G'd's principal Presence is WITHIN the souls of the righteous. THEY are the true sanctuary of the Lord. Since G'd dwells within them, His Presence extends over the holy ark, the temple etc. This is the meaning of the verse in Chronicles II 6,5–6 "I have not chosen a city from the tribes of Israel....but I chose My servant David to rule there". The verse begins by discussing the city, only to end by discussing the role of David. The meaning is that until David came "I could not choose a city for a temple, however, by being at home within David, I can transfer my Presence to the temple itself", says G'd.

This is the reason that only David and kings descended from him are allowed to remain seated within the precincts of the temple, the *azarah*, the area referred to here as *chatzerecha*. (Yuma 25)

The holy spirit answers David not to be amazed at the fact that G'd can reside, i.e. feel at home on earth, i.e. in the temple. It is NOT

ה אַשְׁרֵי תִּבְחַר וּתְקָרֵב יִשְׁכֹּן חֲצֵרֶיךָ נִשְׂבְּעָה בְּטוּב
בֵּיתֶךָ קְדֹשׁ הֵיכָלֶךָ׃
ו נוֹרָאוֹת בְּצֶדֶק תַּעֲנֵנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ מִבְטָח כָּל-קַצְוֵי-
אֶרֶץ וְיָם רְחֹקִים׃
ז מֵכִין הָרִים בְּכֹחוֹ נֶאְזָר בִּגְבוּרָה׃

the physical site that is the main element in G'd's Presence, but he who is worthy *ashrey* to have become the *merkavah*, the carrier of G'd's Presence. Who is such a person? He who is allowed to "dwell in Your courtyards", i.e. David. (compare Midrash Tehillim 1,2 based on Samuel II 7,18 "David sat in the Presence of the Lord", quoting Rabbi Chiyah in the Jerusalem Talmud)

The temple became the source of inspiration by the holy spirit. *kedosh heychalecha* refers to the holy ark, the repository of G'd's entourage. From there, it spreads throughout the temple.

6. Concerning David's third difficulty, i.e. what sense it makes to bring an offering to G'd who owns all anyways, the holy spirit replies that *nora-ot betzedek te-annenu*, by means of charity and vows, G'd is prepared to perform awesome things, so that His greatness will become acknowledged throughout the world. An example are people who make vows while on stormy seas, believing themselves to be lost. When they are saved, they acknowledge G'd. A classic example is found in Jonah 2,10 "I will sacrifice to You with loudly expressed gratitude, will sacrifice to You and pay off what I have vowed" – Deliverance is only G'd's!

Compare Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer chapter 10, where we are told that Jonah's prayer was not answered till he vowed to make a sacrifice to G'd of Leviathan on the day that Israel will be redeemed. Only then did G'd command the fish to spit Jonah out on the dry land. (verse 11)

We have a similar instance of Jacob making a vow; (Genesis 28,20) vowing to present gifts to G'd. Also Yiphtach is reported making a vow in acknowledgment of the victory G'd would grant him over the Beney Ammon. (Judges 11,30)

Through the charity promised, i.e. *betzedek*, G'd was prompted to perform *no-ra-ot* awe inspiring deeds. *kol katzvey aretz*, His *mivtach* trustworthiness became known in the far corners of the earth as well as in the distant seas.

7. This power of paid up charity vows also prompts G'd to make even mountains capable of responding to the farmers' efforts and

[8]*who stills the raging seas, the raging waves, and tumultuous peoples.*
[9]*Those who live at the ends of the earth are awed by Your signs; You make the lands of sunrise and sunset shout for joy.*
[10]*You take care of the earth and irrigate it; You enrich it greatly, with the channel of God full of water; You provide grain for men; for so do You prepare it.*

produce crops. This even when G'd's anger at mankind has already caused general famine. Bereshit Rabbah 33,3 tells that during a year of famine, in the time of Rabbi Tanchum, the latter had ordered a string of fast days to pray for rain but no rain had materialized. Rabbi Tanchum thereupon told his students to practice charity in order to secure mercy from G'd. His students observed a man giving money to his divorced wife. They told Rabbi Tanchum of this, suspecting that the money had been given to obtain sexual favors. They complained that they could hardly expect mercy from G'd while such conduct was being tolerated in their midst!

Rabbi Tanchum asked his students what precisely had transpired. Upon further investigation it turned out that the ex husband had given the money to that woman to relieve her acute financial distress. Thereupon Rabbi Tanchum turned to heaven and said "if this man who was under no further obligation to provide for this woman, has seen fit to help her, will not You who have undertaken to provide for the Jewish people and whose attributes are *rachum vechanun*, that You are merciful, display this mercy and provide for us?" Beneficial rain materialized immediately after Rabbi Tanchum's prayer. Deuteronomy 14,22, is interpreted to mean that if you give the requisite tithes, you will become enriched. (Rashi there)

8. You of whom we have said in verse 6 that You are the One whom people even at the end of the earth put their trust in, becalm the seas so that those who made charitable vows on stormy seas will reach harbours safely. The "seas" can be understood allegorically. Jewish people are exposed to turbulent times, and the message is that charity saves from danger. The multitude of nations, *hamon le-umim*, can also refer to waves of nations who attack Israel, each one hoping to succeed where the last attack had failed to wipe out the Jewish nation. Compare Midrash Tehillim 2,2, which describes each wave in the ocean being confident that it has the power to flood the beaches where its predecessor had failed.

ח מַשְׁבִּיחַ שְׁאוֹן יַמִּים שְׁאוֹן גַּלֵּיהֶם וַהֲמוֹן לְאֻמִּים:
ט וַיִּירְאוּ יֹשְׁבֵי קְצָוֹת מֵאוֹתֹתֶיךָ מוֹצָאֵי בֹקֶר וָעֶרֶב תַּרְנִין:
י פָּקַדְתָּ הָאָרֶץ וַתְּשֹׁקְקֶהָ רַבַּת תַּעְשְׁרֶנָּה פֶּלֶג אֱלֹהִים מָלֵא מָיִם תָּכִין דְּגָנָם כִּי-כֵן תְּכִינֶהָ:

G'd becalms the waters to prevent them from causing the damage intended. Similarly, He restrains the power of our enemies.

9. Once the nations have grasped that it is You who perform all these deeds, they will fear You and rejoice towards You when they leave their houses in the mornings as well as when they return home in the evenings.

10. Our sages in Bereshit Rabbah 4,4 commenting on Job 36,27 "He forms the droplets of water which turn into rain", say that every beneficial rainfall, *matar* contains a drop of water from the heavenly regions. The Psalmist refers to this when he says that he had described the accomplishment of G'd in providing rain as an immeasurably great accomplishment.

Charity accomplishes two *nora-ot*, awesome deeds; He is the source of people's trust even at the furthest corners of the earth. The Psalmist had compared this to the ability to calm stormy seas.

When the people read this, they must wonder at such a comparison.

The Creator, who has created the universe and all it contains, surely had made provision for its creatures and people to have a source of livelihood, otherwise what was the point of the creation? Even a human king is presumed to have the wherewithal in his treasury to assure his people a livelihood. Since we have the principle of *im eyn kemach eyn Torah* that where there is no livelihood, spiritual values such as Torah cannot be expected to flourish", (Avot 3,17) why would the provision of rain be considered as *no-ra-ot* an awesome accomplishment?

G'd's accomplishment however, consists of the fact that even when He provides for the whole universe out of His treasury, He does not deplete His treasury thereby by one iota. This is why the Psalmist says "I know that even when You provide for the earth in two stages, i.e. not *vatishkah* with one letter *kuph* but *vateshokekah*, You remain rich, G'd's fountain is always filled with water.

Peleg mayim, is the celestial water reservoir, the source of rain,

11Saturating its furrows, leveling its ridges, You soften it with showers, You bless its growth.
12You crown the year with Your bounty; fatness is distilled in Your paths;
13the pasturelands distill it; the hills are girded with joy.
14The meadows are clothed with flocks, the valleys mantled with grain; they raise a shout, they break into song.

66 *For the leader. A song. A psalm.*

where a missing drop is never noticed. This was the meaning of the Midrash Rabbah, i.e. that G'd's contribution though *no-ra-ot*, awe inspiring, is as if only a single drop had been drained from His reservoir.

The Talmud Taanit 2 therefore describes the key to THAT treasury as one that G'd does not like to entrust to anyone else. Bereshit Rabbah 4,4, quoted an illustration of the concept developed. After a bather had bathed himself in hot water, and weighed himself, he found that he had not lost weight, though of course, he had sweated profusely in the hot water. This is supposed to illustrate how G'd's supply of water does not decrease even though He dispenses the rain.

Retention by G'd of the key to rain, i.e. that G'd does not hand over that key to anyone permanently, is even more applicable to the key of *chayah*, i.e. the ability to conceive and give birth.

G'd does not provide the whole earth with irrigation through rivers like He did in Egypt with the river Nile, in order that mankind should remain dependent on Him.

If it were to be like in Egypt all over the globe, mankind would turn away from religion, believing that there is not need for G'd, and that nature provides all our needs. This would force G'd to let the species perish due to their collective guilt.

Here the Psalmist expresses this thought saying *tachin deganam* You prepare their grain harvest, i.e. it is due to heaven, *ki chen techineha* in order that You make her (earth) firm so that she does not totter.

11. You should first water its ridges for the enjoyment of man, and subsequently settle its furrows. This is similar to the verse in Psalms 42,8 "the deep calls to the deep at the sound of Your channels".

יא תְּלָמֶיהָ רַוֵּה נַחֵת גְּדוּדֶהָ בִּרְבִיבִים תְּמוֹגְגֶנָּה צִמְחָהּ
תְּבָרֵךְ:
יב עִטַּרְתָּ שְׁנַת טוּבֶךָ וּמַעְגָּלֶיךָ יִרְעֲפוּן דָּשֶׁן:
יג יִרְעֲפוּ נְאוֹת מִדְבָּר וְגִיל גְּבָעוֹת תַּחְגֹּרָנָה:
יד לָבְשׁוּ כָרִים הַצֹּאן וַעֲמָקִים יַעֲטְפוּ-בָר יְתְרוֹעֲעוּ אַף
-יָשִׁירוּ:

סו א לַמְנַצֵּחַ שִׁיר מִזְמוֹר הָרִיעוּ לֵאלֹהִים כָּל-הָאָרֶץ:

Bereshit Rabbah 13,13, on this verse, describes the descent of the celestial waters as being like the male who rushes to meet the female, i.e. the subterranean waters that rise to meet it. The interaction of these waters fructifies, since the "lower" waters rise 2 inches for every inch the "upper" waters descend. This is what is meant by the two "deep" calling to each other. *nachat gedudeha*, refers to the "landing" of the heavenly armies of rain on the furrows of the earth.

Then make it soft with fine drizzle, *revivim* and bless its growth, i.e. for the benefit of the animals which graze. This will be the beneficial result for the animals of Israel's proper conduct. The *revivim* cause growth where there are no furrows, where the earth has not been worked.

12. Once rain has fallen, the crops have been blessed, You will crown the year in all its other aspects with Your goodness. Everything emanates from *peleg elokim*, the Divine water reservoir.

13. David adds that if the pastures of the desert drip, i.e. that there is evidence that the bounty of G'd is due to the worst scenario, i.e. only because of G'd's concern for the animals, the hills will still become ringed with harvests.

14. Even though it is clear that the principal beneficiaries will be the beasts, i.e. the meadows will be clothed with sheep, the valleys will be dripping corn for human consumption. We will certainly sing in gratitude to G'd even though from a humbled heart, since we realize that man eats only due to the merit of the animals. *yitro-a-u*, while doubly (two letters *ayin* from *ra*, evil) aware of his shortcomings, *af yashiru* they will sing nevertheless in gratitude.

Psalm 66

1. This Psalm deals with this long and bitter exile, the end of which

[2]Raise a shout for God, all the earth; sing the glory of His name, make glorious His praise.
[3]Say to God, "How awesome are Your deeds, Your enemies cower before Your great strength;

is not in sight, has not been revealed. G'd Himself is reported as not having revealed to His mouth what was in His heart. (Midrash Tehillim 9,2)

The very length of this exile, may cause sections of the Jewish people to question what G'd has in mind for us, especially when accompanied by the interminable comments of the gentile nations, who still dance about the temple that has been destroyed and ask sarcastically "where are Your G'd's mighty deeds"? This even led Jeremiah and Daniel respectively, to omit mention of G'd's *gevurot* mighty deeds, and *noraot* awesome accomplishments, in our daily prayers since manifestations of these attributes of G'd had ceased. (compare Jeremiah 32,18 and Daniel 9,4) If Israel's reservations about G'd's guidance of its fate were to be expressed no more forcefully than by the omission of these attributes in our prayers, this would not be too bad. After all, Jeremiah only meant to indicate that at THAT time G'd did not employ this attribute.

Jeremiah and Daniel understood that G'd's failure to employ such attributes would encourage blasphemy amongst the enemies of Israel. Because of this, G'd's restraint in punishing them also allowed Him to deflect part of Israel's punishment so that He allowed the destruction of the temple rather than the destruction of the Jewish people, and the verse in Deuteronomy 32,43 *vechipper admato ammo*, "that its land was atonement for its people" was fulfilled.

Haman's attack on Israel was also due to the assumption that Israel's G'd had aged and lost His strength. (Esther Rabbah 7,13) None of the nations can comprehend that true *gevurah*, manifests itself on occasion in the exercise of restraint rather than in reacting to insults immediately.

This long and terrible exile however, could easily produce a negative reaction by the Jewish people. They might believe that G'd had obviously entrusted the fortunes of the earth and its people to the rulers of the respective great empires, and that would lead to a major *chilul hashem*, desecration of the name of G'd. David therefore considered it important to address words of encouragement to those generations who would suffer during those many centuries.

The triple introduction of *lam-natzeach-mizmor-shir*, serves notice that in this hymn David will try and make Israel feel better by

ב זַמְּרוּ כְבוֹד-שְׁמוֹ שִׂימוּ כָבוֹד תְּהִלָּתוֹ׃
ג אִמְרוּ לֵאלֹהִים מַה-נּוֹרָא מַעֲשֶׂיךָ בְּרֹב עֻזְּךָ יְכַחֲשׁוּ-
לְךָ אֹיְבֶיךָ׃

referring to three distinct kinds of salvations which Israel has experienced in the past. They are the salvation from the exile of the Babylonians, the Medes (Ahasverus) and that of the Greeks under Antiochus. Because of this, Israel should offer triple thanks and praises. When Israel will reflect on the fact that G'd had been its Saviour three times, they will take heart and believe that the fourth and final redemption will come too, even though no one knows when.

Concerning the nations who boast about their own achievements and who make fun of the Messiah, the Psalmist says "wake up to the Lord and humble yourselves – you who think that G'd has given YOU *kol ha-aretz*, all the earth! This Psalm discusses both the nations and Israel, addressing itself to Israel first, commencing in the next verse.

2. David requests of Israel to sing the glory of G'd's name. We know, and we have discussed in our commentary on Psalms 2,5, that Abraham had elected for Israel to undergo the exile of the 4 kingdoms as a guarantee against possibly being consigned to purgatory in the future. He thereby assured Israel of a share in the hereafter, the glory of the world to come. G'd employing the attribute of justice during the bitter years of exile, is considered an honour for the Jewish people, since G'd's afflictions are intended for our ultimate good.

"Sing and give praise for the glory you will inherit due to G'd employing His name *elokim* when dealing with you. As to your temptation to request that G'd employ only the attribute of mercy when dealing with you – in view of the bombastic behaviour of the nations of the world, – I the Psalmist say "be careful that you acknowledge as His *tehillah*, praise the fact that He has displayed restraint. Do not, G'd forbid, misinterpret this as an act of weakness by G'd.

3. Do not only say this to one another, but say to G'd "how awesome are Your works". When the gentiles blaspheme and prance around on the site of the former temple, asking "where is Your G'd"?? You should demonstrate your faith that you consider His ability to tolerate such behaviour as proof of G'd's might, *rov uzcha*.

Of course, they, the gentiles cannot appreciate this, i.e. *ye-kachashu lach oyvecha*, your enemies deny everything you say.

You, as exiles, are expected to acknowledge that G'd's might is

[4]*all the earth bows to You, and sings hymns to You; all sing hymns to Your name.*" Selah.
[5]*Come and see the works of God, who is held in awe by men for His acts.*
[6]*He turned the sea into dry land; they crossed the river on foot; we therefore rejoice in Him.*
[7]*He rules forever in His might; His eyes scan the nations; let the rebellious not assert themselves.* Selah.
[8]*O peoples, bless our God, celebrate His praises;*

evident by the way He subjects you to the yardstick of strict justice so that He can guarantee your future redemption. We do not question "where is Your awesomeness etc."? This is a far greater proof of greatness than the taking of immediate revenge on the blasphemers.

4. In the future, when You G'd will display Your goodness for us at the time of the Messiah, and the whole earth will bow down to You and sing to You, – they will sing Your name (*elokim* in retrospect, acknowledging that it was Your great name (attribute of *elokim*) that had placed Israel under their authority to wipe out our sins. *Selah*, finally, they will realize this.

5. We have stated at the beginning that David addresses himself to two groups of people. One is Israel in exile, the other, those who keep Israel oppressed in exile. In the last three verses, David spoke either directly to Israel, or concerning Israel. Now he turns to those who have kept Israel prisoner in their lands. The Psalmist tells the nations not to make fun of G'd and to believe that Israel's experiences could not possibly be a demonstration of G'd's awesome power, and that Israel's lowly position could not demonstrate that He only meant to elevate them in the future.

The Psalmist says that on the contrary, G'd can combine acts of judgement and mercy in a single act, He has the proclivity *alilah*, to do this with man.

6. At the time when G'd had dried out the sea to enable Israel to traverse it, He performed an awesome act affecting all the nations. as we read in Joshua 2,11, where Rahav admits this. At that time G'd had subdued also the spiritual representative of Egypt. We read in Exodus 14,30, "Israel saw Egypt dead (singular) on the beaches of the sea". All this is explained in Shemot Rabbah 21,5, based on the word *met* (for "died") instead of *metu* (plural). G'd's letting Israel cross the sea safely, was an act of mercy, whereas the Egyptians,

ד כָּל-הָאָרֶץ יִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְךָ וִיזַמְּרוּ-לָךְ יְזַמְּרוּ שְׁמֶךָ סֶלָה:
ה לְכוּ וּרְאוּ מִפְעֲלוֹת אֱלֹהִים נוֹרָא עֲלִילָה עַל-בְּנֵי אָדָם:
ו הָפַךְ יָם לְיַבָּשָׁה בַּנָּהָר יַעַבְרוּ בָרֶגֶל שָׁם נִשְׂמְחָה בוֹ:
ז מֹשֵׁל בִּגְבוּרָתוֹ עוֹלָם עֵינָיו בַּגּוֹיִם תִּצְפֶּינָה הַסּוֹרְרִים אַל-יָרִימוּ לָמוֹ סֶלָה:
ח בָּרְכוּ עַמִּים אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהַשְׁמִיעוּ קוֹל תְּהִלָּתוֹ:

drowning at the same time, experienced this as an act of judgement.

Similarly, when Israel crossed the river Jordan on foot to begin its conquest of the land of Canaan, this miraculous dry crossing was an act of judgement, striking fear into the Canaanites.

We rejoice with G'd there – because at one and the same time He exercised judgement against others while being good to us. Now the shoe is on the other foot... While we are in exile, G'd performs acts of judgement against us, while simultaneously treating the nations kindly.

7. In order that you nations should not think that once He allowed the temple to be destroyed, He removed His Presence from the earth only to entrust its fate to human rulers, you must know this. He rules the earth by means of His unique ***gevurah***, mighty deeds, i.e. His ability to restrain display of His might, by watching how the nations will use or abuse their sovereignty over Israel,

Those who act rebelliously in their treatment of Israel should not exalt themselves, – ***selah*** (believing that this is the ultimate fate of Israel) for they will be called to an accounting in due course.

Abraham had already said to his sons by Keturah (his concubine), that whoever oppresses Israel in this world will not experience G'd's goodness in the world to come. (Tanna de bey Eliyahu 22). On the other hand, at the end of Massechet Sofrim, we read that Abraham built a kind of city for the sons of Keturah that would isolate them from the rest of the world so that they would not forfeit their share in the world to come after the coming of the Messiah.

8. Having told the gentile nations that Israel's fate in their hands is not due to G'd's inability to look after them, and that His silence at their blasphemous conduct should not be misinterpreted, but that that very silence is part of His awe-inspiring behaviour, and that they must not think that they can continue in their own ways indefinitely, the Psalmist calls on them to bless the Lord.

9who has granted us life, and has not let our feet slip.
10You have tried us, O God, refining us, as one refines silver.
11You have caught us in a net, caught us in trammels.
12You have let men ride over us; we have endured fire and water, and You have brought us through to prosperity.
13I enter Your house with burnt offerings, I pay my vows to You, 14[vows] that my lips pronounced, that my mouth uttered in my distress.

The gentile nations could ask why G'd handed over Israel to the gentile nations if He loved them and why would He hold the gentile nations responsible if they performed His will in oppressing them? On the contrary, G'd should consider it a meritorious act on their part, that since He had delivered Israel into their hands they did not exterminate the nation! This is why Israel (Psalmist) concludes his words to the gentiles. Concerning their first argument he says "bless the Lord our G'd". Concerning their second argument, he says *hashmi-u kol tehilato*, proclaim the praises of His mighty acts!"

9. Explaining its reason, Israel says "bless, nations the Lord our G'd". This is because He has put our souls into life, *hasam nafscheynu bachayim* (not the reverse). The fact that He made us subservient to you was not because He loved you, but because Abraham had made a covenant assuring us of eternal existence. (our share in the world after the arrival of the Messiah). He had "sold" part of our life on this earth, in order to assure us of our share in the future. When we said to you "proclaim His mighty acts", that is because *lo natan lamot ragleynu*, He has not let our feet totter; we did not perish totally while amongst you.

All of this was for YOUR benefit, since your whole existence is dependent on ours. Our sages in Taanit 3, commenting on Zachariah 2,10 "for like the 4 winds of the sky I swept you there says G'd", explain the meaning of the prophet. Just as the world cannot endure without various winds from the 4 directions, so it could not exist without Israel. Had you nations exterminated Israel while we have been under your power, you would have signed your own death warrant. Therefore, you cannot claim credit for not having exterminated us.

10. Israel's dialogue with the nations – described by the holy spirit, – concludes with Israel saying "we are grateful that You have made

ט הַשָּׂם נַפְשֵׁנוּ בַּחַיִּים וְלֹא-נָתַן לַמּוֹט רַגְלֵנוּ:
י כִּי-בָחַנְתָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים צְרַפְתָּנוּ כִּצְרֹף-כָּסֶף:
יא הֲבֵאתָנוּ בַמְּצוּדָה שַׂמְתָּ מוּעָקָה בְּמָתְנֵינוּ:
יב הִרְכַּבְתָּ אֱנוֹשׁ לְרֹאשֵׁנוּ בָּאנוּ בָאֵשׁ וּבַמָּיִם וַתּוֹצִיאֵנוּ
לָרְוָיָה:
יג אָבוֹא בֵיתְךָ בְעוֹלוֹת אֲשַׁלֶּם לְךָ נְדָרָי:
יד אֲשֶׁר-פָּצוּ שְׂפָתָי וְדִבֶּר-פִּי בַּצַּר-לִי:

our exile experience a ***bechinah***, test, enabling us to prove ourselves, instead of an act of retribution for our sins. In Babylonia You tested us by subjecting us to the image Nebuchadnezzar had made and to which Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah refused to bow to, putting their lives in jeopardy, and being thrown into a fiery furnace. Just as fire refines, removes dross, our sins were wiped out at that time through public acts of ***kiddush hashem***, sanctification of the Lord's name.

11. By putting us in a "cage" in the days of Ahasverus, You placed restraint on our loins through fasting – which resulted in cleansing us from the sin of bowing to Haman's ***tzelem***, idolatrous image. The fasting had the same effect as if someone had removed impurities from silver. It had been Your intention to start with not to kill us in retribution for our sins. Later, when Ezra and companions went to the land of Israel, all those with him were righteous.

12. Later still, You imposed upon us the rule of a mere ***enosh***, inferior human being, i.e. the Greeks, who came to the temple to defile it and to make us renounce the laws of Israel. In order to escape that threat, we went through fire and water, i.e. to war, under the leadership of the Hasmoneans. You guided us and them to victory.

13. For all these reason, I also await Your salvation from this 4th exile, when I will be able to return to Your house, the one that You will rebuild. I will then pay off my vows with total offerings. These total offerings are to atone for those occasions when we doubted You and the way You seemed to manage our fates.

14. These total offerings had been vowed by my lips during my exile, either in the forms of ***neder*** or ***nedavah***, (gift offerings) when I had been in distress.

15*I offer up fatlings to You, with the odor of burning rams; I sacrifice bulls and he-goats.* Selah.
16*Come and hear, all God-fearing men, as I tell what He did for me.*
17*I called aloud to Him, glorification on my tongue.*
18*Had I an evil thought in my mind, the LORD would not have listened.*
19*But God did listen; He paid heed to my prayer.*
20*Blessed is God who has not turned away my prayer, or His faithful care from me.*

67 *For the leader; with instrumental music. A psalm. A song.*
2*May God be gracious to us and bless us; may He show us favor,* Selah. 3*that Your way be known on earth, Your deliverance among all nations.*

15. The descriptions of these offerings indicate that they are being offered from a generosity of spirit, since they all represent the finest of their respective kinds.

16. David asks Israel to listen to him, especially all those who are full of hope should remember that if G'd rescued David, i.e. a mere individual, from all his troubles, He would certainly do so for the sake of the whole community.

17. "When my mouth called on Him, when exultation was still UNDER my tongue, i.e. I had not yet formulated it, He already had decreed my salvation."

18. Had I had an evil thought in my mind, He would not have listened to me, i.e. would not have considered my unspoken thoughts as equivalent to having been executed in deed.

19. The message here is almost identical to Psalms 21,3. Even when David started praying, as we explained in 51,17, before one makes requests from G'd, one tells of His accomplishments. Nonetheless, before reaching the stage of making requests, G'd has already listened to my prayer as a supplicant, says David.

20. David blesses G'd for NOT having told him that since He has already decided to help him, there was no longer any point in his prayer.

Psalm 67

1. This hymn discusses Messianic times as understood by Maimonides Hilchot Teshuvah 9,2 and at the end of Hilchot Melachim.

סו עֹלוֹת מֵחִים אַעֲלֶה-לָּךְ עִם-קְטֹרֶת אֵילִים אֶעֱשֶׂה
בָקָר עִם-עַתּוּדִים סֶלָה:
סז לְכוּ-שִׁמְעוּ וַאֲסַפְּרָה כָּל-יִרְאֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
לְנַפְשִׁי:
יז אֵלָיו פִּי-קָרָאתִי וְרוֹמַם תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנִי:
יח אָוֶן אִם-רָאִיתִי בְלִבִּי לֹא יִשְׁמַע אֲדֹנָי:
יט אָכֵן שָׁמַע אֱלֹהִים הִקְשִׁיב בְּקוֹל תְּפִלָּתִי:
כ בָּרוּךְ אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא-הֵסִיר תְּפִלָּתִי וְחַסְדּוֹ מֵאִתִּי:

סז א לַמְנַצֵּחַ בִּנְגִינֹת מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר:
ב אֱלֹהִים יְחָנֵּנוּ וִיבָרְכֵנוּ יָאֵר פָּנָיו אִתָּנוּ סֶלָה:
ג לָדַעַת בָּאָרֶץ דַּרְכֶּךָ בְּכָל-גּוֹיִם יְשׁוּעָתֶךָ:

At that time, there will be two major events. 1) The profusion of G'd's blessings on Israel. 2) Sanctification of the Lord's name, when He judges the nations righteously. The first event is referred to by the heading *mizmor*, the second by the heading *shir*.

2. David begins speaking about G'd's blessing for Israel. When a person is out of favour with his king, and wants a favour from the king, he does not approach the king until he finds someone who enjoys the king's favour. He then waits for an occasion when the king is in a good mood to have a good word put in on his behalf.

Israel does not have such an intermediary when it wishes to find favour in G'd's eyes, it has to appeal to G'd directly. Therefore, it appeals in two stages. First we ask *yechanenu*, that G'd grant us grace, favour. Once we have attained that, we can ask *vi-yevarecheynu*, that He should bestow blessings on us. Our sages who have composed the daily morning benedictions concluding with the words *gomel chassadim tovim*, have made us recite amongst other requests "let us obtain this day grace, favour and mercy in Your eyes... and bestow loving kindness on us".

This is nothing other than what David says here. The whole point is to remind us that G'd cannot be compared to a human king.

Another difference between human rulers and G'd is this. The former, even when they show their appreciation for one of their subjects in the form of granting them titles or money or land,

[4]*Peoples will praise You, O God; all peoples will praise You.*
[5]*Nations will exult and shout for joy, for You rule the peoples with equity, You guide the nations of the earth.* Selah.

gradually change their attitude to the recipient, feeling less and less in the recipient's debt. They feel that they have discharged their obligations towards the subject. Not so with G'd. He continues to grant profuse blessings, even increasing them, i.e. *ya-er panav itanu selah.* We can FEEL that His face shines, beams upon us on an ongoing basis, *selah.*

3. If G'd were to ask why we care if He applies *midat hadin* now after Israel has found favour and been blessed even by the attribute of justice, Israel explains that people on earth *ba-aretz* would have no OTHER way of knowing that G'd can combine *din* justice and *rachamim*, mercy in one action, i.e. *darkecha* is *din* and *yeshuatcha* is *rachamim.* While we experience salvation, the nations simultaneously must experience judgement.

4. The constantly changing description of the nations of the world as *amim* and *le-umim* in verses 4–6, deserves our attention. Also, concerning the *amim* the word *tishpot* is used, whereas of the *le-umim* the Psalmist talks about *tanchem* You will guide them. Why all these distinctions?

In Massechet Sofrim chapter 66, section 9, we find that Abraham told the sons of his concubines that any nation that would oppress the Jewish people in the future, would ultimately collapse. He therefore told them to isolate themselves in the far corners of the earth, so as not to make common cause with those who will oppress Israel, and to surround themselves with a high wall. He told them not to come forth till the arrival of the Messiah, and then to serve G'd and Israel.

Our sages in Baba Batra 15 also said that the queen of Sheba (respectively the kingdom of these descendants of Keturah) mistook Solomon for the Messiah, and that the true meaning of the word *malkat sheva* should be *malchut she-ba* the kingdom that came, i.e. the kingdom that came out of isolation believing the Messianic era to have arrived. According to Rabbi Yonathan then there never has been the legendary queen of Sheba, only an obscure nation, unnamed. At any rate when those people found out that they had erred, that the Messiah had not arrived yet they returned to their land to await the arrival of the Messiah at a later date.

We have a tradition that the expression *le-um* refers to a kingdom,

ד יוֹדוּךָ עַמִּים אֱלֹהִים יוֹדוּךָ עַמִּים כֻּלָּם:
ה יִשְׂמְחוּ וִירַנְּנוּ לְאֻמִּים כִּי-תִשְׁפֹּט עַמִּים מִישֹׁר
וּלְאֻמִּים בָּאָרֶץ תַּנְחֵם סֶלָה:

i.e. a state, not to a nation, i.e. a tribe or ethnic unit. The Psalmist says that he has asked that Israel be shown favour so that the world can see G'd performing *din* and *rachamim* simultaneously by deploying the attribute of justice. In addition, the gentiles must also realize from what is being done to them what G'd's ways are like. There are three categories of knowledge they must acquire then. 1) Justice will be done to them, expressing G'd's anger for their having mistreated Israel. Of the various gentile nations, some have actively oppressed Israel, others have merely failed to deal kindly with Israel. Some of those nations then G'd will merely not deal kindly with, though He will not subject them to harsh measures. They are the ones who have merely shown indifference to Israel's plight in exile. There are also kingdoms whom G'd will deal with kindly, such as the nations who have secluded themselves such as the descendants of Keturah, Abraham's concubine.

The Psalmist says twice *yoducha amim*, nations will acknowledge You gratefully. The word *elokim* is interposed between these two statements. The first *amim* are the ones who have mistreated Israel. Of them it is said *yoducha amim elokim*, these nations will praise the attribute of justice of G'd, since they will acknowledge G'd's justice. Acknowledgment of G'd's justice while in purgatory is considered a greater tribute to G'd than that offered by the righteous in *gan eden*, as we have explained on Psalms 6,6.

Concerning the second group of nations, those who have not experienced G'd's attribute of justice on their own selves, have observed it only being at work on others, the Psalmist says *yoducha amim kulam*.

5. Concerning the last group of nations, the ones who stand ready to acknowledge and serve the Messiah as their king, the ones referred to as *le-umim*, the Psalmist says that they will immediately rejoice. What they will rejoice over is the righteous justice G'd dispenses to all other nations, i.e. to pay back those who have mistreated Israel, and to refrain from extending His special favours to those who had shown indifference to Israel's plight.

Yerannenu, they will jubilate that G'd guides the fates of those kingdoms, i.e. like servants to whom the king of kings is favorably disposed, and wants to show His appreciation.

[6]*The peoples will praise You, O God; all peoples will praise You.*
[7]*May the earth yield its produce; may God, our God, bless us.*
May God bless us, and be revered to the ends of the earth.

68 *From the leader. Of David. A psalm. A song.*
[2]*God will arise, His enemies shall be scattered, His foes shall flee before Him.*
[3]*Disperse them as smoke is dispersed; as wax melts at fire, so the wicked shall perish before God.*

6. The nations who will be judged, will suffer famine as part of their punishment. They will realize how well G'd treats the Jewish nation since *be-eretz* i.e. in the land of Israel there will be food, and they will come to buy. In other words, by what happens in Eretz Yisrael they will also come to acknowledge the good G'd does with us, not only the justice of their punishment.

7. That is the meaning of "the land gives its harvest", i.e. OUR LAND. The other lands, did not receive beneficial rainfall, only *eretz*. (compare Taanit 10, that Israel is the principal recipient of beneficial rain, the rest of the world receives only the excess; based on Job 5,10)

Psalm 68

1. This hymn is based on the fact that the *Shechinah* i.e. the all embracing name *elokim* comprises simultaneous manifestation of both mercy and justice as explained on Exodus 15,11, in connection with the saving of the Israelites and the drowning of the Egyptians at the sea of reeds.

Another subject matter of this hymn is the fact that when the *Shechinah* is in self imposed exile at the time Israel is in exile, G'd continues to exercise His supervision over what goes on both in heaven and on earth.

The word *mizmor* is the caption for the first subject, the word *shir* is the caption for the second subject the Psalmist addresses.

2. Concerning the first subject, the Psalmist says *yakum elokim*, let the Lord arise! Remarkably, that verse is in indirect speech, refers

ו יוֹדוּךָ עַמִּים אֱלֹהִים יוֹדוּךָ עַמִּים כֻּלָּם:
ז אֶרֶץ נָתְנָה יְבוּלָהּ יְבָרְכֵנוּ אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵינוּ:
ח יְבָרְכֵנוּ אֱלֹהִים וְיִירְאוּ אֹתוֹ כָּל-אַפְסֵי-אָרֶץ:

סח א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר:
ב יָקוּם אֱלֹהִים יָפוּצוּ אוֹיְבָיו וְיָנוּסוּ מְשַׂנְאָיו מִפָּנָיו:
ג כְּהִנְדֹּף עָשָׁן תְּנַדֹּף כְּהֵמֵס דּוֹנַג מִפְּנֵי-אֵשׁ יֹאבְדוּ רְשָׁעִים מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים:

to G'd in the third person, whereas in verse 3 the Psalmist switches to direct speech. In the Torah, (Numbers 10,35) this sentiment is also expressed in direct language when Moses says *va-yafutzu oyvecha* AND may YOUR enemies be scattered. Here, however, the Psalmist says "may His enemies be scattered" without the connecting letter *vav* "and".

Our sages in Nedarim 8, have explained that in the future, when G'd burns the wicked, He will simultaneously give pleasure to the righteous. We read in Maleachi 3,19 "here there will come a day... when all the arrogant will burn like an oven, will be like straw...but for you who revere My name, a healing sun will shine". Our sages have also said that G'd will remove the sun from its orbit to burn the wicked. The same sun, at the same time, will heal the righteous.

The Psalmist here refers to this event in a similar fashion, showing how G'd, while punishing the sinners, brings joy and pleasure to the *tzaddikim*. Moses distinguished between G'd's *oyvim* and *sonim*, the former being scattered, the latter being put to flight, but both remaining ALIVE.

3. But the Psalmist, speaking of the distant future, says "I ask that You scatter the wicked utterly like smoke, as wax melts fire, i.e. that they should NOT survive. It should not occur in the manner Moses has described as a spontaneous event, the originator of which is not clearly discernible, but YOU must be seen to be the author of this event, and no trace of the victims should remain. This much for the *oyvim*, those who expressed their opposition to G'd in deeds and who believed they had some cause.

Concerning the second group of people, who hate You without apparent cause, the *sonim*, they should be put to flight before You so

[4]But the righteous shall rejoice; they shall exult in the presence of God; they shall be exceedingly joyful.
[5]Sing to God, chant hymns to His name; extol Him who rides the clouds; the LORD is His name.
Exult in His presence—

that they have no refuge and melt like wax, because you will become for them like fire. (as in the verse from Maleachi 3,19.)

4. But at the same time, the righteous will provide the attribute of justice with a chance to display the attribute of mercy simultaneously, as they rejoice *lifney elokim*, in the very presence of the attribute of justice. The very circumstance which makes Your adversaries melt like wax, i.e. the HEAT of Your fire, will shine for them, be a source of healing. No longer will the righteous need to mix trembling with service to the Lord (Psalms 2,11) "serve the Lord in awe, tremble in fright".

5. Before explaining this verse, we need to mention a comment by our sages in Chagigah 12, that there are 7 celestial regions in the order *Vilon, Rakiah, Shechakim, Zevul, Ma-on, Machon* and *Aravot*.

Vilon serves no other function than daily to reveal G'd's work by allowing the stars and the moon to shine forth at night and the sun by day. *Rakiah* contains the sun, moon, stars etc., i.e. "outer space".

Shechakim is the habitat of angels, spiritual beings, devoid of bodies. The angels there grind the Mannah for the righteous in the hereafter.

Zevul contains the celestial temple, sanctuary, and the archangel Michael sacrifices there on the altar.

Ma-on contains different groups of ministering angels.

Machon contains *ruach se-arah*, G'd's reservoir of stormy winds etc.

Aravot contains, *tzedek*, the souls of the righteous, G'd's throne etc.

We have stated repeatedly that these 7 heavens are NOT to be confused with the 7 fixed stars. (the astronomic theory prevailing at the author's time) If that was what the Talmud had in mind, how could both moon and stars all be part of the region called *rakiah*? Besides, how could the celestial temple be situated in a region orbited by the sun! Would it not be an insult to conceive of the celestial temple in a region that needs to undergo daily renewals such as the sun? Could one conceive of "the sun setting on the celestial temple", or that it is orbiting constantly, having no fixed abode?

ד וְצַדִּיקִים יִשְׂמְחוּ יַעַלְצוּ לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים וְיָשִׂישׂוּ בְּשִׂמְחָה:

ה שִׁירוּ לֵאלֹהִים זַמְּרוּ שְׁמוֹ סֹלּוּ לָרֹכֵב בָּעֲרָבוֹת בְּיָהּ שְׁמוֹ וְעִלְזוּ לְפָנָיו:

(The author reinforces this argument further, and disproves attempts to make Resh Lakish's statement in Chagigah refer to observable phenomena in our 3 dimensional world.)

At any rate, the author concludes that there is conclusive evidence that the term "7 *raki-im*" is not to be confused with the 7 orbiting fixed stars.

Now to explaining our verse. In verse 3 and 4, the Psalmist used the future tense, i.e. that G'd should arise in the future, whereas here he employs the imperative, i.e. the present tense, speaks about the "now". In the future, punishment of the wicked and relief for the righteous will be something occurring simultaneously. Why does David NOT request for this to happen already now? Will not someone reading these lines conclude that G'd is presently too weak (Deut. 32,18) to perform such deeds, and that therefore the Psalmist consoles us that He will do so only in the future?

Will people not conclude that while the temple is in ruins, G'd's Presence in exile, that His options are limited? Or, even that it is Israel's sins which have reduced G'd's freedom of action? (as per Deut. 32,18) Will they not think that He has abandoned His supervision of mankind's fate and entrusted it to human agents such as the rulers of the respective empires?

To counter such thinking, the Psalmist exhorts the people *shiru lelokim*, sing to the Lord, i.e. do not think that your present pitiful state in exile is a valid description of your true position in the world. If the attribute of justice deals with you, this is for your own good.

Neither must you think that your present low position is due to His weakness or inability; rather *zamru shemo*, chant hymns to His name, it has not changed due to old age. Even if one were to think that He has withdrawn to the furthermost regions of the heavens, i.e. to *aravot*, the region of His throne, this does not mean that He abandons earth and mankind to its fate.

(The process of withdrawal of G'd's noticeable Presence to the 7th heaven, due to successive sins of mankind since Adam until Abraham, we have described based on Bereshit Rabbah 19,7 and Tanchuma Numbers 29, as well as its subsequent reversal starting with Abraham and ending with Moses.)

[6]*the father of orphans, the champion of widows, God, in His holy habitation.*
[7]*God restores the lonely to their homes, sets free the imprisoned, safe and sound, while the rebellious must live in a parched land.*

At any rate, ***aravot*** is not ever conceived of as a ***moshav***, permanent seat of G'd's Presence, rather ***rochev***, He rides there on occasions. If you prepare the way for Him, i.e. ***solu mesilah***, remain aware of His exaltedness, ***ro-me-mu***, you prove that you do not want this withdrawal to become a permanent residence in the ***aravot***.

You will extol Him, the one whose name ***yud heh*** indicates simultaneous Presence in this world, i.e. the letter ***heh***, and in the celestial regions, i.e. the letter ***yud***. (Bereshit Rabbah 12,10 and Menachot 29)

G'd's greatness, ***ro-me-mut***, exaltation, is the very fact that despite His "distance" in remote celestial regions, He continues to supervise what goes on in our part of the universe. *Ilzu!* – the Psalmist asks us to exult that we enjoy His supervision, i.e. that we continue to be ***lefanav***, as if in His Presence.

Bereshit Rabbah 68,9, explains the verse in Deut, 33,27, that "the ancient G'd is a refuge" as follows. G'd is the world's refuge, the world is not His refuge. When a warrior rides a horse and his cloak and weaponry is hanging down, the horse is merely incidental. It is not the horse that sustains the rider, but vice versa. (Yerushalmi) The reason that the horse is the means of transportation chosen in the parable rather than a carriage, is that when riding in a carriage, the rider is totally above the carriage. Not so the rider of a horse, whose clothing etc. is hanging down from the flanks of the animal. The Psalmist hints that G'd even when "riding" in the ***aravot*** remains astride the earth, so to speak, at the same time. The Midrash could have referred to the rider's legs which are hanging down also, but does not do so. The legs are an inseparable part of the rider, not so his garments. G'd's essence is in the ***aravot***, but His emanations – viz. His "clothing" extends into our "lower" world just like the rider's cloak. In the language of our sages these emanations are called ***kanfey hashechinah***, "the wings" of the ***Shechinah***, Divine Presence. (compare Isaiah 6,1 or 66,1)

6. The Psalmist illustrates some of G'd's functions on our earth even at times when He is "riding" ***ba-aravot***.

7. He even supervises that everyone should find a suitable wife. Bereshit Rabbah 68,4 tells the following. A famous lady asked Rabbi

אֲבִי יְתוֹמִים וְדַיַּן אַלְמָנוֹת אֱלֹהִים בִּמְעוֹן קָדְשׁוֹ׃
אֱלֹהִים מוֹשִׁיב יְחִידִים בַּיְתָה מוֹצִיא אֲסִירִים
בַּכּוֹשָׁרוֹת אַךְ-סוֹרְרִים שָׁכְנוּ צְחִיחָה׃

Yossi bar Chalafta how long it had taken G'd to create the universe. When told that it took 6 days, she wanted to know what G'd had been doing ever since. Rabbi Yossi told her that since that time G'd had been spending most of His time arranging suitable marriages. The lady replied that this was something that even she could do with her slaves. She claimed to be able to arrange suitable pairings in no time at all. Rabbi Yossi told her that though this might appear easy to her, G'd finds it extremely difficult, as difficult as splitting the sea. Rabbi Yossi discontinued this conversation.

The lady took 1000 male slaves and 1000 female slaves and paired them according to her judgement, all in one evening. The following morning, most had visible injuries. All of these had been sustained in arguments between the couples "matched up" by the lady in question. She then sent word to Rabbi Yossi acknowledging that there is no G'd like the G'd of the Jews, and that our Torah was the only true teaching. Rabbi Yossi told her "did I not tell you that even G'd finds this task most difficult?!"

G'd arranges for marriages that are involuntary when the parties do not deserve better, or for suitable marriages when they deserve it. The word *bakosharot* (in chains) could be read in two words, i.e. *bechi shirot*, (either crying or rejoicing, songs of thanksgiving). When the marriages do not work out due to PRIOR faults of the parties, the result is *bechi*, crying, otherwise, there are *shirot*. (The author has dealt with this problem at great length in his second commentary on Psalms, chapter 45)

Another version has Rabbi Yossi say that G'd establishes ladders. The respective marriage partners meet, some while ascending the ladders, others while descending it. According to that version, there is no need to separate the word *bakosharot* into 2 words. G'd in such situations pairs men and women who had not originally been intended for each other, i.e. suited to each other by their personality achievements, but whose conduct had necessitated for G'd to make a change in their marital destiny.

The diminutive word *ach* in front of the word *so-rerim* the rebellious ones, indicates that not ALL such people are subject to Divine interference. Sometimes, *assirim*, prisoners, are freed by G'd,

[8]*O God, when You went at the head of Your army, when You marched through the desert,* Selah.
[9]*the earth trembled, the sky rained because of God, yon Sinai, because of God, the God of Israel.*
[10]*You released a bountiful rain, O God; when Your own land languished, You sustained it.*
[11]*Your tribe dwells there; O God, in Your goodness You provide for the needy.*
[12]*The LORD gives a command; the women who bring the news are a great host:*

– others, rebellious people, *sore-rim* who while they had been well off had defied, wind up living on a parched land.

A different meaning for verse 5–7. The Psalmist asks Israel to sing to G'd, though what He does to the gentiles is justice, retribution, whereas it is the exact opposite for Israel at the same time. The fact that the attribute of justice manifests itself as a source of visible blessing for Israel, is what requires to be acknowledged by song. G'd's ways are the reverse of those of human rulers. When human authority is seen to be at work, i.e. the police or the army, people tend to become afraid. When they know the executive arm of their ruler to be far away however, they tend to feel more at ease. When G'd's Presence is NEAR, in the lower celestial regions, or even right here on earth, this is a sign of His benevolence, whereas His very withdrawal is reason to inspire fear of impending retribution.

Therefore, – *rome-mu*, when He is *rochev ba-aravot*, but *ilzu* when *lefanav* He is nearby and you can feel His Presence.

Verses 6 and 7 put things into perspective, and tell us that even when He is *rochev ba-aravim*, riding in the highest celestial regions, G'd never ceases to act as *avi yetomim*, the father to the orphans etc.

8. The theme of the *midat hadin*, attribute of justice, simultaneously inspiring fear etc. as well as bestowing favours, is resumed with these verses. G'd accompanied Israel as a pillar of cloud throughout its march in the desert, for instance.

9. He inspired trembling amongst all the forces of nature both on the ground and in the air. (Tanchuma Beshalach 3) On the other hand, on Sinai, 68,10. where Israel was to accept the Torah, the effect of the *midat hadin*, attribute of justice, was *geshem nedavot*, bountiful, blissful rain. The fire surrounding Sinai was quenched for the sake of Israel by the descent of dew ordered by G'd. (Mechilta Yitro section 9)

ח אֱלֹהִים בְּצֵאתְךָ לִפְנֵי עַמֶּךָ בְּצַעְדְּךָ בִישִׁימוֹן סֶלָה:
ט אֶרֶץ רָעָשָׁה אַף-שָׁמַיִם נָטְפוּ מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים זֶה סִינַי
מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
י גֶּשֶׁם נְדָבוֹת תָּנִיף אֱלֹהִים נַחֲלָתְךָ וְנִלְאָה אַתָּה
כוֹנַנְתָּהּ:
יא חַיָּתְךָ יָשְׁבוּ-בָהּ תָּכִין בְּטוּבָתְךָ לֶעָנִי אֱלֹהִים:
יב אֲדֹנָי יִתֵּן-אֹמֶר הַמְבַשְּׂרוֹת צָבָא רָב:

The Talmud in Shabbat 88, says that Israel died at that time, when they heard the first two commandments. This is based on Song of Songs 5,6, "my soul departed when He spoke". Israel had been unable to cope with the awe inspiring voice of G'd, but was immediately revived. This was all part of the *rachamim* manifestating itself while the attribute of justice was at work.

The dew sprinkled on Israel at THAT time was of the same kind as the one that will resurrect our bodies when the time arrives in the future. Not only was Israel weary through receiving the great insights at the time of the revelation, something that weakens the flesh if imparted while one is fully conscious, but Israel retreated backward 12 miles, i.e. the length of the entire encampment. The ministering angels helped them back to camp 10 times. This is meant by *venilah, attah konanta.*

11. Your "collective" life force (singular) stayed there. This additional life force You G'd supplied to each Jew at the time of the revelation, i.e. to Your *nachalah.* (see verse 10) This additional life force could not be hosted by their bodies. This is the way the "death" of the Israelites at the time of the revelation is to be understood. In order for Israel to absorb G'd's voice and message, their life force had to be temporarily OUTSIDE their bodies. G'd therefore had to prepare their bodies *tachin*, just as He will do in the future at the time of the resurrection. This dew therefore had to contain spiritual qualities.

Just as it is Your way G'd to support the poor out of Your goodness, so You have done this for the physically weak *ani* of Your "inheritance", *nachalatcha*, i.e. Your people.

12. This verse describes the mechanics of G'd's "bountiful rain" (verse 10). He told the heavens to make this dew drip on His children; the result was so much joy in heaven that great "armies" made it their business to proclaim what was happening.

13 *"The kings and their armies are in headlong flight;*
housewives are sharing in the spoils;
14 *even for those of you who lie among the sheepfolds*
there are wings of a dove sheathed in silver, its pinions
in fine gold."
15 *When Shaddai scattered the kings, it seemed like a*
snowstorm in Zalmon.

13. Then the "kings" of these "armies", i.e. the respective heads of the various camps of the *Shechinah* who had thought that the bodies of the Israelites would not be revived, and that the Torah would after all be given to the angels, had to back off. (They had opposed Israel receiving the Torah, Shabbat 88)

It became clear that *nevat bayit*, that the bodies of Israel would be the ones to transmit the treasure of the Torah to mankind, as will be explained. (*Nevat Bayit*, the soul dwelling in a house, i.e. a body).

14. Having said that all the secrets the scholars will reveal in the future are the insights their souls absorbed at Sinai, how do we reconcile this with such statements as in Megillah 6, that if someone tells you that he came by these without intensive study, – do not believe him! (i.e. his insights are not valid) Does not Solomon tell us the same in Proverbs 2,4, where he says "if you seek it like you search for silver... then you will understand it"?

The answer is that while in a disembodied state, it was easy for the soul to come by these insights. (just like an unborn baby is taught the whole Torah only to forget it at the time of birth) But once these souls enter a body, it becomes an exhausting effort to overcome the influence of the body, and to convert potential theoretical knowledge into articulate speech. We have explained this in our commentary *rav penimim* on Proverbs.

This is why our sages, commenting on Deut. 30,13, "she (the Torah secrets) is not beyond the sea...but can be attained easily", explained that Torah cannot be truly maintained by people whose concern is to carry on trade and commerce across the oceans, and who chase material wealth all over the earth.

The Psalmist therefore says *im tishkavun beyn shefatayim*, if you lie down (like Issachar, Genesis 49,14) i.e. you immerse yourself in study, – then through the *Shechinah* which spreads its wings over the houses of study, there will awaken in you your latent store of Torah insights, the ones your soul had absorbed at the time it stood at Mount Sinai when G'd revealed the Torah.

kanfey yonah is a reference to the *Shechinah* which is not visible

יג מַלְכֵי צְבָאוֹת יִדֹּדוּן יִדֹּדוּן וְנֵוַת בַּיִת תְּחַלֵּק שָׁלָל׃
יד אִם-תִּשְׁכְּבוּן בֵּין שְׁפָתָיִם כַּנְפֵי יוֹנָה נֶחְפָּה בַכֶּסֶף
וְאֶבְרוֹתֶיהָ בִּירַקְרַק חָרוּץ׃
טו בְּפָרֵשׁ שַׁדַּי מְלָכִים בָּהּ תַּשְׁלֶג בְּצַלְמוֹן׃

though, i.e. *nechpah* hidden from the eye.

The silver should remain *nechpah*, covered up, not of foremost concern. It is a condition that you do not pile up silver like dust, (Job 27,16) and that you despise gold as if unwanted. (Job 22,24)

evrocheha bi-yerakrak Silver may be a simile for permissible economic activity by the Torah scholar. This is because it represents a necessity for feeding the family. Pursuit of gold however, is definitely not appropriate to the scholar. It is apt to make his Torah secrets "fly away" i.e. the feathers, wings of the dove are perceived as shimmering like gold, symbolic of Torah insights flying away.

Possibly, this is why the Psalmist distinguishes between *kanfey* the wings proper, integral, part of the *yonah*, dove, and the feathers, i.e. parts used only to fly with.

15. On Proverbs 8,15, "through me kings reign", our sages in Gittin 62, say that the reference is to Torah scholars, i.e. the words of the Torah scholars enable kings to reign. The difficulty is that certain Torah scholars such as Rabbi Chaninah ben Dotha, Rabbi Eleazar ben Pedot or Rabbah bar Nachmeni did not even have bread enough to feed their families. How could they then be viewed as possessing the stature of kings? We have explained in our commentary on Proverbs that the Zohar clarifies this when discussing Jeremiah 10,7 "for amongst all of the nations, and all their kings, there is none like You". This seems to presuppose that amongst the sages of Israel there are some who are "like You", i.e. like G'd. This is obviously an intolerable thought. The sages explain therefore that the meaning is that none of the gentile sages can influence G'd to do what the Jewish sages can cause Him to do, such as making the sun arrest its orbit, or turn vinegar into superior fuel as did Rabbi Chananyah ben Dotha, or innumerable other miracles of that sort.

In THAT respect the Jewish sages compare to G'd, since they too can override laws of nature. There is obviously no king whose stature is greater than a scholar who can command nature in this fashion. It is quite in order then to describe Torah scholars as kings, regardless of their lack of an economic or military power base.

The Psalmist in our verse speaks about the advantages that were conferred upon the souls when each one received his share of Torah

[16]O majestic mountain, Mount Bashan; O jagged mountain, Mount Bashan;
[17]why so hostile, O jagged mountains, toward the mountain God desired as His dwelling?
The LORD shall abide there forever.
[18]God's chariots are myriads upon myriads, thousands upon thousands; the LORD is among them as in Sinai in holiness.
[19]You went up to the heights, having taken captives, having received tribute of men, even of those who rebel against the LORD God's abiding there.

insights, i.e. the ability to discover new dimensions to Torah. When the attribute of justice spreads on earth, *be-fores shaddai*, there are kings, i.e. Torah scholars on it *melachim bah*, able to tame some of its power and turn darkness into snow like white light, *tashleg tzalmon*.

16. How can the mountain of G'd, i.e. Sinai be simultaneously a *har gavnunim*, a jagged mountain? (or blemished mountain) Besides, there is only one, whereas the Psalmist addresses it as if it were several in verse 17, i.e. *lamah teratzdun*, why do you exalt yourselves (plural)? Besides, our sages (Bereshit Rabbah 99,1) say that the mountains Hermon, Tabor and Gavnunim which had previously been at the far ends of the earth, – came to that area (to receive the honour that the Torah should be given on them) (Bamidbar Rabbah 13,3)

G'd rejected them as *giben o dak*, having been blemished because they had served as basis for idolatrous purposes.

If so, how can *har elokim* be *har gavnunim*? Besides, since the Psalmist speaks about G'd residing on that mountain *lanetzach* forever, (verse 17), this could not apply to Sinai on which G'd descended only briefly in order to give the 10 commandments etc.? (Taanit 21) We see that as soon as the *Shechinah* had departed, the animals were again permitted to graze on the mountain. (Exodus 19,13)

When two high mountains came and asked that the Torah be given from them, and G'd did not accept their offer, He said that Mount Bashan which is in the tribal territory of Reuben and Gad, and which is also steep, jagged, is also called *gavnunim*. G'd said that though it is a mountain of G'd, i.e. a mountain situated normally in Eretz Yisrael, i.e. one of the tribal mountains, it is preferable to Mount

טז הַר-אֱלֹהִים הַר-בָּשָׁן הַר גַּבְנֻנִּים הַר-בָּשָׁן:
יז לָמָּה תִרְצְדוּן הָרִים גַּבְנֻנִּים הָהָר חָמַד אֱלֹהִים
לְשִׁבְתּוֹ אַף-יְהוָה יִשְׁכֹּן לָנֶצַח:
יח רֶכֶב אֱלֹהִים רִבֹּתַיִם אַלְפֵי שִׁנְאָן אֲדֹנָי בָּם סִינַי
בַּקֹּדֶשׁ:
יט עָלִיתָ לַמָּרוֹם שָׁבִיתָ שֶּׁבִי לָקַחְתָּ מַתָּנוֹת בָּאָדָם וְאַף
סוֹרְרִים לִשְׁכֹּן יָהּ אֱלֹהִים:

Hermon which is beyond the tribal territories of Israel. If G'd had wanted a HIGH mountain, THAT mountain could have qualified.

17. G'd said to the various mountains "do you think I am looking for the tallest mountain as the mountain of G'd? Absolutely not, for if so I could have chosen *har gavnunim*. G'd makes it plain that He could not take up residence on a tall mountain because people would then conceive of Him as dwelling there physically. This is like Solomon's rhetorical question in Kings I 8,27, "can G'd really dwell on earth?"

G'd also told the mountains that since He would be on Mount Sinai only briefly, they had nothing to be jealous of. The mountain *chamad elokim*, which G'd desired, was NOT meant to be His permanent dwelling.

18. Even the descent of G'd to Mount Sinai must not be imagined in the physical terms we tend to think in. Exodus 19,20, "G'd descended on Mount Sinai, on the top of the Mountain", means that G'd was surrounded by myriads of chariots and thousands of angels, according to the Midrash. All this lasted only while Sinai was *bekodesh*, performing a sacred mission.

According to Pessikta Rabbati 21, Rabbi Acha says that in the future G'd will bring Mount Carmel, Mount Tabor and Mount Sinai together and build the third temple on their combined tops.

To the argument that even if G'd was surrounded by myriads of chariots and angels, He had made Sinai His choice, implying that the mountain itself had superior qualities, the Psalmist says *Sinai bekodesh*, it was G'd's Presence that lent holiness and importance to Sinai; it is NEVER a site which imparts its qualities to G'd.

19. We have explained in connection with Exodus 19,3, that Moses had ascended towards G'd. The Talmud Baba Metzia 85 describes the ability of Rabbi Chiyah AFTER he died to ascend to the *yeshivah shel ma-alah*, the academies in the celestial spheres WITHOUT his needing angels to accompany him. Moses, in the Torah, is described

20 *Blessed is the LORD.*
Day by day He supports us, God, our deliverance. Selah.
21 *God is for us a God of deliverance; GOD the Lord provides an escape from death.*

as ascending to heaven while still in a body, something that even Rabbi Chiyah (an example for an outstanding and pious scholar) had been unable to do until after he had shed his body. Even the prophet Elijah who ascended while alive, had needed fiery horses and a chariot, i.e. the entourage of angels to carry him to the celestial regions in a storm. (Kings II 2,11)

The Psalmist explains that Moses' stature was so much greater than even that of the angels that comprise G'd's entourage, as outlined in verse 18, that he ascended without help, and this is one of the reasons G'd gave the Torah to Israel through Moses and not through an angel.

One could think that ONLY the *peshat*, the plain meaning of the written Torah was given to Moses, because it deals with *mitzvot ma-assiyot* commandments to be performed by means of the body, to be performed by terrestrial beings, but that the hidden meanings which are purely spiritual in nature were given to the angels, seeing they are purely spiritual beings.

To make certain that we do not think along those lines, the Psalmist emphasizes the unaided ascent of Moses, – and the Talmud the unaided ascent of Rabbi Chiyah. Each one demonstrated on his respective level that man is superior to the angels. (if he fulfils his potential)

shavita shevi, you were able to take captive that which is normally out of bounds, beyond reach, i.e. the hidden dimensions of the Torah, the *sod*.

lakachta matanot, refers to the tablets with the 10 commandments Moses received directly from G'd, although *ba-adam* he was a corporeal human being. To the question "what good was all this, seeing Israel sinned immediately and the tablets were smashed, and death and dependence on earth and body were reinstated"?, the Psalmist answers.

Despite the *sore-rim* the rebellious conduct with the golden calf, G'd instructed the building of the holy tabernacle and took up residence amongst the Israelites, i.e. not *BETOCHO* in the tabernacle, but *betocham*, within the hearts of the Israelites (Exodus 25,8). This means that Israel became the true sanctuary of G'd. (Jeremiah 7,4)

כ בָּרוּךְ אֲדֹנָי יוֹם יוֹם יַעֲמָס-לָנוּ הָאֵל יְשׁוּעָתֵנוּ סֶלָה:
כא הָאֵל לָנוּ אֵל לְמוֹשָׁעוֹת וְלַיהוִה אֲדֹנָי לַמָּוֶת תּוֹצָאוֹת:

20. Having listened to the Psalmist extol Israel's superiority over the angels, the listener is liable to question angrily that if all this is so, how is it that not a day passes when the Jew does not experience persecution, demeaning treatment in exile, to say nothing of being in physical danger because of his Jewishness?

The holy spirit, acting as Israel's spokesman, therefore sums up what Israel's attitude is, i.e. to be content to get through each day on a day by day basis without upsets, i.e. *baruch hashem yom yom.* Israel does NOT complain about its trials, on the contrary, *ya-amoss lanu,* is willing to accept a measure of burdens. The use of the name *adnut* for G'd in this verse, is a clear reference to the attribute of justice which is being addressed. Israel thanks the attribute of *el* which helps make the daily load of *yissurim,* afflictions, bearable. This is a reference to the Zohar, 3,31 on Psalms 7,12, that the attribute of *el* is angry daily at the attribute of *elokim,* i.e. it tries to soften the impact of the attribute of justice. To the extent that *adnut* weighs us down, *ya-amoss lanu,* the *el* proves to be our salvation, eases the burden on an ongoing basis, i.e. *selah.*

21. People could ask "why does not G'd save us altogether, instead of employing the attribute of *el* only to reduce the effect of our *yissurim*? Why should we have to bless the attribute *adnut* for subjecting us to our daily ration of *yissurim,* afflictions? We would be better off without any afflictions at all!" The Psalmist replies that indeed the attribute *el* acts for us as *le-moshaot* (plural) a string of minor salvations rather than *yeshu-ateynu* (singl) i.e. one overriding salvation; our troubles are only being ameliorated, not eliminated.

However, the whole purpose of the attribute of *adnut* which causes us a constant stream of *yissurim,* is to see to it that once we die we are not going to be exposed to retribution in purgatory.

The *yissurim* in this world reverse our destiny from being *lemattah,* i.e. "downwards" towards purgatory to *lema-alah,* "upwards", towards *gan eden.* This is why the Psalmist says *ve-lelokim a-do-nai la-mavet totza-ot.*

The letters in the word *lelokim* are the letters (consonants) of the *midat harachamim,* attribute of mercy, though the vowel are those of the *midat hadin,* attribute of justice. Clearly this has a deeper meaning. Also, the Psalmist says *ve-lelokim,* instead of *le-lokim.*

22God will smash the heads of His enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks about in his guilt.
23The LORD said, "I will retrieve from Bashan, I will retrieve from the depths of the sea;
24that your feet may wade through blood; that the tongue of your dogs may have its portion of your enemies."
25Men see Your processions, O God, the processions of my God, my king, into the sanctuary.

Also the word *a-do-nai* once more after *lelokim* is strange! After all THAT is the attribute that inflicts the *yissurim* on us!

The 4 lettered name of G'd with the vowel *elokim* is the highest attribute of G'd we know of, as is familiar to students of the Kabbalah. No one can be elevated to the celestial regions in which this attribute is usually manifest, unless he had previously undergone *yissurim*, afflictions on earth. This is the meaning of this word coupled with the preposition *lamed*. In order to arrive ultimately in that region, *a-do-nai*, i.e. *yissurim* are a necessary prerequisite.

This is the preparation for *lamavet totza-ot*, moving forward to that region at the time of death. The meaning of the entire 2 verses is that though the attribute *el* eases some of the burden of *yissurim* which we welcome because of their eventual benefit, a total cessation of *yissurim* is not even welcome, since only through a steady diet of *yissurim* do we preserve our chance of ultimately finding ourselves within that celestial environment in which G'd's highest attribute resides.

22. This verse concludes the comments of the Jewish people. Israel says "we have blessed the Lord for imposing afflictions on us in bearable instalments", as explained in verse 20 and 21. However, Israel adds, I wish that G'd will see fit to smash the heads of Israel's oppressors IN THIS LIFE. Even if He will not smash their entire bodies, let Him at least smash their heads, i.e. their kings or rulers, the ones who are primarily responsible for persecuting us.

At least the *kodkod harosh*. Why is not even a hair on their heads harmed, and they can proceed upright through life without anyone interfering with them? Why are they allowed to be untroubled by guilt? Why should G'd have to endure that a person commits evil ALL his life without experiencing ANY interference or retribution?

23. The holy spirit replies to this argument by saying "let no one believe that I am a *vatran*, waive My right to retribution for harm done

כב אַךְ־אֱלֹהִים יִמְחַץ רֹאשׁ אֹיְבָיו קָדְקֹד שֵׂעָר מִתְהַלֵּךְ
בַּאֲשָׁמָיו:
כג אָמַר אֲדֹנָי מִבָּשָׁן אָשִׁיב אָשִׁיב מִמְּצֻלוֹת יָם:
כד לְמַעַן תִּמְחַץ רַגְלְךָ בְּדָם לְשׁוֹן כְּלָבֶיךָ מֵאוֹיְבִים
מִנֶּהוּ:
כה רָאוּ הֲלִיכוֹתֶיךָ אֱלֹהִים הֲלִיכוֹת אֵלִי מַלְכִּי בַקֹּדֶשׁ:

to My people." If an antisemite dies before the time for his punishment in this life had come, I will bring him back from Bashan or the depths of the sea in order to ensure that he will receive his due.

The Zohar on Psalms 21,9, see our commentary, explains that G'd will bring back to life in the flesh all the one time oppressors of Israel from the various eras of exile, and that He will perform on them acts of retribution so that all their victims will be able to watch. (This is based on Zachariah 14,12, when the prophet uses the distant past *asher tzav-u* instead of the immediate past or present *tzovim* for those who had participated in the Gog and Magog war.)

24. You will then wade in the blood dripping from the dogs who eat the remains of your enemies *minehu*, i.e. at the instigation of G'd Himself.

Of all the sins these people are held accountable for, what they have done to Israel is what is worst. Even after this retribution for what they have done to you, Israel, they still remain G'd's enemies, have not yet paid for their other sins, the ones committed vis a vis Him directly.

25. In verse 19 we described how G'd's love for His people exceeds that of His love for the angels, since He enabled man to ascend to the highest part of heaven unaided by angels. The Psalmist now returns to that subject. He says that not only at the time of the revelation when Israel had shed its residual pollutant, – acquired at the time Adam had sinned, – did You G'd display that love. When Israel came out of Egypt, a few days after having been steeped in idolatry, You displayed Your love by letting them cross the sea in 12 separate lanes, each one lined by walls of water. You treated each tribe like a beloved nation. (Tanchuma Beshalach 10, see Psalms 136,13) This was just like later, when my G'd, my King allocated the holy land, i.e. *kodesh* to 12 tribes separately, each one receiving its own territory.

[26]*First come singers, then musicians, amidst maidens playing timbrels.*
[27]*In assemblies bless God, the LORD, O you who are from the fountain of Israel.*
[28]*There is little Benjamin who rules them, the princes of Judah who command them, the princes of Zebulun and Naphtali.*

26. You have shown Your love in additional ways, such as when the men sang the ***shirah***, song of thanksgiving, after having crossed the sea. They were allowed to sing even before the ones who sing regularly, the ***nognim***, the angels. Also the women were allowed to sing and play the drums. (before the angels).

The Midrash explains the words ***betoch alamot***, that the women were in between the men and the angels. (Shemot Rabbah 23,7 on Exodus 15,20)

In fact, according to one view, the angels were not allowed to sing, since G'd resented this seeing He had had to destroy part of His handiwork. Even we later generations recite only a muted "half" Hallel on Passover to remind ourselves of this in our morning prayers.

Another view of verse 25 and 26 is briefly and simply that though Israel was content to be comparable to the angels, – G'd even gave Israel precedence over the angels.

Another view, – the ***halichot***, i.e. the more than one way, are the fact that G'd, ***elokim***, the attribute of justice, displayed justice and retribution on the Egyptians and on their ***sar***, spiritual representative. (compare Shemot Rabbah 22,3)

He did us the kindness of letting us observe such an essentially spiritual phenomenon with our mortal eyes. Only beings called "Israel" have ever been granted such a ***chessed***, kindness. All this was a simultaneous display of ***din***, justice and ***chessed***, kindness.

27. The holy spirit explains that the Jewish women in Egypt were of such calibre that they were given precedence in singing to G'd in choirs over the angels. In fact, they were ritually superior to the men.

On the verses 4,12 and 8,5 in Song of Songs, we read in Bamidbar Rabbah 3,6 that all the unmarried Jewish girls were virgins and all the married Jewish women were totally chaste., i.e. ***gan na-ul*** and ***gal na-ul*** respectively. A locked garden, or a locked spring, respectively.

Had it not been for these women, there would have been no Exodus, and certainly no celebrating the crossing of the sea and the escape from the pursuers, in song.

28. Having said that Israel's being preferred over the angels was

כו קִדְּמוּ שָׂרִים אַחַר נֹגְנִים בְּתוֹךְ עֲלָמוֹת תֻּפֵּפוֹת:
כז בְּמַקְהֲלוֹת בָּרְכוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲדֹנָי מִמְּקוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל:
כח שָׁם בִּנְיָמִן צָעִיר רֹדֵם שָׂרֵי יְהוּדָה רִגְמָתָם שָׂרֵי
זְבֻלוּן שָׂרֵי נַפְתָּלִי:

due to the purity of their origin, such a statement must have been galling to David who was descended from an originally Moabite woman, a nation which came into being through the incestuous relationship of Lot and his daughters.(Ruth, 4,17, – Genesis 19,37) Similarly, on David's father's side, Peretz was the issue of a coupling by Yehudah with his daughter-in-law Tamar. (Genesis 38,29). Reflecting on all this, David may have felt very uncomfortable.

The holy spirit, therefore, wants to put David's mind at rest. It recalls that the site and source of the Jewish mother's ritual purity was the *yam suf*, the sea of reeds. This was also the site at which David's eventual dynasty was founded by his ancestor Nachshon who was the first to demonstrate his faith in G'd's help by wading into the sea up to his nostrils. According to tradition, the tribe of Benjamin had made ready to enter the waters, but was pulled back by Nachshon and his companions who were jealous of Benjamin securing such an honour for himself. Nachshon's companions stoned the Benjaminites.

Our sages read here instead of *rodem*, *rad yam*, descended into the sea. (Sotah 36, Mechilta Beshalach 14,22) The tribe of Yehudah, i.e. *sarey yehudah* stoned them *regamim*. According to the Mechilta there, since both tribes were highly motivated, they both received a reward. Yehudah was rewarded by *malchut* temporal leadership of the nation, the kingship, whereas Benjamin, i.e. the tribe of Benjamin was granted the site on which the temple would be erected. If we do not want to separate the word *rodem*, we may derive it from *rado*, to exercise authority. It would mean then that Benjamin was about to exercise authority until Yehudah wrested it from him.

At any rate, had there been a defect in David, or Nachshon's ancestry, G'd would certainly not have allowed the tribe of Yehudah to provide the kings for the Jewish nation.

The Psalmist goes on to say that G'd performed miracles not only by means of the tribes of Benjamin and Yehudah, but also through the leaders of such tribes as Zevulun and Naftali. At any rate, the holy spirit reassures David by saying that had there been any disqualifications in his ancestry, G'd would have performed the

29*Your God has ordained strength for you, the strength,*
O God, which You displayed for us
30*from Your temple above Jerusalem.*
The kings bring You tribute.
31*Blast the beast of the marsh, the herd of bulls among the peoples, the calves, till they come cringing with pieces of silver.*
Scatter the peoples who delight in wars

miracles only through the tribe of Benjamin, not through that of Yehudah.

29. On the contrary, at that very time *sham*, verse 26, i.e. at the time Israel crossed the sea, G'd commanded your *oz*, your pre-eminence to last until the advent of the Messiah. (Genesis 49,3, see Tanchuma Vayechi 10)

The Talmud Sotah 37, also describes Psalms 114,2 "Yehudah became His sanctuary" etc., because "the sea saw and fled, the Jordan turned backwards". David, – modestly, – replies *uzzah elokim*, I cannot ascribe *oz* to myself; only You are true *oz*, when the *Shechinah* emerges from its self imposed exile *pa-alta lanu*, then You do something for us, i.e. the REAL redemption. Your own "redemption" automatically triggers Israel's redemption.

30. Having said that Israel does not aspire to possess *oz* in the future, i.e. as its attribute, but rather it wants G'd to be manifest as *oz*, that the *Shechinah* should be visible, the Psalmist describes that as a result of this display of *oz*, the nations' kings will offer gifts. (Shemot Rabbah 35,5)

David prays that G'd should not consider this as something for which the nations deserve credit. After all, *me-heychalecha*, whatever they offer You has been taken from Israel, Your "sanctuary", since Israel have been called *heychal hashem*, the sanctuary of the Lord. (Jeremiah 7,4 as per Chullin 91)

Furthermore, we recall the statement of our sages in Bereshit Rabbah 78,12 on the verse "kings of Tarshish and the islands will "bring back" gifts etc." (Psalms 72,10) Significantly, it does not say there "they will bring", i.e. *ya-vi-u* but "they will bring him back", *yashivu*. When Jacob had urged Esau to accept gifts from him, he assured Esau that ultimately he, Esau, would return these gifts to the Jewish people, i.e. to the temple. That is why he said *kir-ot peney elokim*, "when it will see the presence of G'd". (Genesis 33,10)

It is primarily Jacob who qualified to be called G'd's sanctuary. He is "above" Jerusalem, i.e. his features are engraved in the heavenly

כט צַוֵּה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עֻזֶּךָ עוּזָּה אֱלֹהִים זוּ פָעַלְתָּ לָּנוּ׃
ל מֵהֵיכָלְךָ עַל-יְרוּשָׁלַם לְךָ יוֹבִילוּ מְלָכִים שָׁי׃
לא גְּעַר חַיַּת קָנֶה עֲדַת אַבִּירִים בְּעֶגְלֵי עַמִּים מִתְרַפֵּס
בְּרַצֵי-כָסֶף בִּזַּר עַמִּים קְרָבוֹת יֶחְפָּצוּ׃

sanctuary. The kings of Tarshish will merely be returning gifts Jacob had presented to Esau when the two had met after Jacob had been away from home for 36 years.

31. Since this is so, they deserve no credit for the gifts they will offer in the sanctuary of the future. On the contrary, the Psalmist urges G'd to rebuke *chayat kaneh*, i.e. *Tzor*, the oppressor, Rome.

The Talmud in Shabbat 56 reports that when Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter, the archangel Gabriel stuck a reed *kaneh* in the sea. The mud which collected around it, eventually became the site of Rome. The Talmud in Megillah 6, relates the origin of Rome to the idolatrous images placed in the temple by Menashe the son of king Hezzekiah. (Chronicles II 33,22) Here too, it is the angel Gabriel who is reported as planting a reed in the sea, which eventually grew to become "the Italy of Greece".

At any rate, the Talmud in Pessachim 118, using our verse, explains that the gifts of Rome to the Messiah are to be rejected by him, seeing Rome endeavored to estrange Israel from its G'd. G'd will say to Gabriel "rebuke the wild beasts hiding amongst the reeds", i.e. rebuke the heathens and the community *adat* YOU helped create. The word *kaneh* reed then is equivalent to *kanah*, acquired.

The reason Gabriel was commanded to do this, is because he had been instrumental in creating Rome. No other nation had contributed so much to Israel's serving idols, as had Rome. (Amalek's descendants)

The *adat abirim*, i.e. Israel, the once holy nation, – had become seduced by *egley amim*, by the golden calves worshipped by the gentile nations. Now these nations want to bring me silver to ingratiate themselves *mitrapess*! They want to fill me with goodwill towards them?

Even Egypt was reluctant to make such obsequious gestures, in view of the fact that it had enslaved and tortured Israel. However, G'd had permitted acceptance of its gifts, since they had also played generous host to Israel at the time of the famine, and granted Jacob and family asylum. Possibly, Egypt's reluctance stemmed from Israel's outrage at the thought that Amalek's (Rome) gift could be

32 *Tribute-bearers shall come from Egypt; Cush shall hasten its gifts to God.*
33 *O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; chant hymns to the Lord,* Selah.
34 *to Him who rides the ancient highest heavens, who thunders forth with His mighty voice.*
35 *Ascribe might to God, whose majesty is over Israel, whose might is in the skies.*
36 *You are awesome, O God, in Your holy places; it is the God of Israel who gives might and power to the people. Blessed is God.*

acceptable. There was a case to be made for Egypt's gifts to be refused, seeing, that even after all the plagues and the Exodus, they chased after Israel with murderous intent.

32. G'd replies to these arguments by saying that *chashmanim* and *kush* who had no record of mistreating Israel will be welcome to present gifts. ***taritz yadav***, they will hasten to present their gifts to G'd, not worrying about being rejected.

33. Having said that in the future, kings of nations will offer gifts, and that those of the ***chayat kaneh*** and the like, He will NOT accept, the holy spirit continues as if engaging in a dialogue with the nations who had enslaved Israel. "sing to the Lord, to the attribute of justice, *elokim*, acknowledge that it was HE who put Israel in bondage to you, not your own might or ***mazzal***." By doing this, and realizing that G'd had allowed Israel to be demeaned by you only because Israel had sinned against G'd, you will admit that your task was to carry out His will.

If you do so NOW, you will not have to weep in the future when He will exact punishment from you for abusing Israel. Rather, if you will sing the praises of G'd, – He will accept your gifts at the time the Messiah will establish his kingdom. The reason is that once you have become aware of G'd's purpose, you will not treat Israel harshly, even if they are under your authority in order to atone for their sins.

34. Do not say that it makes NO sense for you to sing to G'd, since He has abandoned His supervision of the earth, as evident by the fact he allowed His temple to be destroyed. Do not think He has abrogated guidance of the earth in favour of other agents. When I said "sing to *elokim*", says the holy spirit, I meant to the *rochev ba-aravot*, the One who rides in the highest celestial regions, above all the galaxies. Not only has He NOT withdrawn totally from

לג יֶאֱתָיו חַשְׁמַנִּים מִנִּי מִצְרָיִם כּוּשׁ תָּרִיץ יָדָיו
לֵאלֹהִים:
לד מַמְלְכוֹת הָאָרֶץ שִׁירוּ לֵאלֹהִים זַמְּרוּ אֲדֹנָי סֶלָה:
לה לָרֹכֵב בִּשְׁמֵי שְׁמֵי-קֶדֶם הֵן יִתֵּן בְּקוֹלוֹ קוֹל עֹז:
לו תְּנוּ עֹז לֵאלֹהִים עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל גַּאֲוָתוֹ וְעֻזּוֹ בַּשְּׁחָקִים:
לז נוֹרָא אֱלֹהִים מִמִּקְדָּשֶׁיךָ אֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא נֹתֵן עֹז
וְתַעֲצֻמוֹת לָעָם בָּרוּךְ אֱלֹהִים:

exercising control over the *sarim* the agents in charge of nature, but He also exercises control over His direct agents, the *malachim*. We have explained all this on verse 5 in our chapter in connection with Deuteronomy 33,27, how a rider though "above" the horse keeps control of the horse itself.

The request or advice to sing praises to G'd *selah* means, that if you do so NOW, you will be able to do so in the future when the kingdom of the Messiah will be established. Otherwise, *yiten bekolo kol oz*, when His voice will assume its all powerful proportions, the sound of which we know as *shover arazim* breaking the mighty cedars, (Psalms 29,5), not a shred of the nations who have oppressed Israel will remain.

35. Maybe you imagine that since you possessed the power to destroy My sanctuary and dance on its site and nothing happened to you, and Israel G'd's people are still subjugated, that is the proof of G'd's continued impotence. The holy spirit warns against such folly, and exclaims "acknowledge G'd's might", *tenu oz lelokim*, and admit your so called *oz* is really "G'd's *oz*," that He granted you whatever might you believed to be yours in your own right. This expresses itself by *al yisrael ga-avato*. G'd's pride is only His acceptance by Israel as its G'd. His strength is His ability to restrain His power in the heavens, *shechakim*, and NOT react immediately to your blasphemous conduct. (compare beginning Psalm 19)

36. Though we know that the visible manifestations of G'd's Presence departed in stages before and during the assault on Jerusalem and the temple, a remnant of the *Shechinah* never departed from the Western Wall, as our sages have assured us. (compare Psalm 46,5)

The Psalmist therefore tells the nations that "G'd is awesome" even if you say that his major Presence has departed from the sanctuary. He remains the power of Israel, i.e. His attribute

69 *For the leader. On* shoshannim. *Of David.*
[2]*Deliver me, O God, for the waters have reached my neck;*
[3]*I am sinking into the slimy deep and find no foothold; I have come into the watery depths; the flood sweeps me away.*

el=chessed, enables Israel to live, to be able to tolerate the suffering it undergoes during exile. *noten oz veta-atzumot la-am. baruch elokim*; its fate is still influenced by these heavenly forces in the celestial regions.

Alternately, – because He is still our *el*, – *baruch elokim*, it is up to us to bless the Lord.

Psalm 69

1. Our sages say that the subjects of this hymn are the Jewish people during their various exiles. The reason the *shoshanim*, roses are chosen as the simile for the Jewish people is that roses combine two distinguishing features, colour and fragrance. Our sages, whenever they refer to *shoshanim*, refer to the *odem*, the redness of the rose. An example is found in Song of Songs, 7,3, "hedged about by roses". When not otherwise qualified, roses are assumed to be red.

The other distinguishing feature is the rose's pleasant fragrance. When exile is depicted as red, the reason is that red symbolizes judgment, anger etc. On the other hand, exile is GOOD for Israel, since its sins are being blotted out due to the bitter afflictions suffered during exile. (Berachot 5, Midrash Tehillim 94,2) Israel's fragrance then emerges as better than ever before G'd. This is why David may also have called exile *shoshanim*, roses, since it fulfils the function of restoring Israel's fragrance in G'd's nostrils.

2. Since there are 4 exiles, Babylonia being the first, the Psalmist begins with the first exile, exclaiming "save me o G'd!".

Normally, when a nation conquers another nation and subjugates it, it is only interested in the physical labour the prisoners etc. can perform. It never concerns itself with the soul of the vanquished.

The exile in Babylonia, though initially only of a physical nature, turned into a threat to Israel's soul, i.e. *ki ba-u mayim ad nefesh*, when the infamous Nebuchadnezzar demanded obeisance by the Jewish people ordering them to pay homage to an idolatrous image. (Daniel chapter 3)

סט א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-שׁוֹשַׁנִּים לְדָוִד:
ב הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי אֱלֹהִים כִּי בָאוּ מַיִם עַד-נָפֶשׁ:
ג טָבַעְתִּי בִּיוֵן מְצוּלָה וְאֵין מָעֳמָד בָּאתִי בְמַעֲמַקֵּי-מַיִם
וְשִׁבֹּלֶת שְׁטָפַתְנִי:

3. Concerning the exile under the Medes (Ahasverus), the Psalmist, portraying Israel, says "I am sunk in deep slime and cannot find a foothold". Our sages in Esther Rabbah 7,13, see as Israel's principal sin during that epoch the fact that they enjoyed Ahasverus' banquet. It had been part of Haman's ploy to make them guilty in the eyes of G'd. The bowing down to Haman's idol was only meant to be the last straw. In the Midrash quoted, Elijah approaches Moses to intercede on behalf of the Jewish people. Moses suggests that it is better that a suitable living person from that generation should do so, for if the decree of G'd had been sealed in blood it would not be subject to intercession by the patriarchs. If the decree, however, had been sealed in mud, *tit*, clay, the combined prayers of the patriarchs and Mordechai could prove effective. We have explained in our commentary on the book of Esther that decrees signed in blood are those that have been due to the sin of idolatry having been committed; this is the sin which goes right to the *nefesh* soul, i.e. the lifeblood of a person. Decrees of that kind are not revoked, i.e. the victim's repentance is not complete unless he has died first. (See Leviticus 17,12 for the relationship of blood and *nefesh*, soul, lifeblood.)

If, however, the decree is sealed in mud, *chomer-cheymor*, i.e. clay, it is due to PHYSICAL enjoyment of sin, such as the eating of forbidden food or drinking of forbidden wine, as occurred during the banquet of Ahasverus. Such decrees can be revoked through repentance and prayer.

The Psalmist describes the sins of the Jewish people at that time as such that the people had no *ma-amad*, have no foothold, could hardly recover, since in addition to mud, i.e. *biyven*, they were suffering from *ba-u mayim ad nefesh*, from the sin of idolatry, which reaches up to the very soul.

True, our sages argue, but they only argue about which of the two sins brought about the decree; they are all agreed that Israel was guilty of both sins. One scholar is quoted in Midrash Tehillim as saying that Haman arranged for them to become guilty of eating and drinking forbidden food, and that this was not an all embracing sin, i.e.

4I am weary with calling; my throat is dry; my eyes fail while I wait for God.
5More numerous than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without reason; many are those who would destroy me, my treacherous enemies.
Must I restore what I have not stolen?
6God, You know my folly; my guilty deeds are not hidden from You.
7Let those who look to You, O LORD, God of hosts, not be disappointed on my account; let those who seek You, O God of Israel, not be shamed because of me.
8It is for Your sake that I have been reviled, that shame covers my face;

only the Jews of Shushan had been at the banquet, the others (the vast majority) had not been invited. The author discusses all this in greater detail in his commentary on Esther 1,8.

At any rate, the Psalmist concludes "first I stepped into very deep waters, (a simile for the sin of idolatry) Afterwards, I added the relatively minor sin, the participation in Ahasverus' banquet. This addition however, was sufficient for the torrent *shibbolet* to sweep me away."

4. The exile under the Greeks (Antiochus) was such that it put Judaism itself at risk. The Jews had to put inscriptions on the horns of their oxen saying "I do not have a share in the G'd of Israel." (Jerusalemite Talmud Chagigah 2,2) Concerning this exile, the Psalmist says that his throat is parched from crying out, his eyes cease seeing from so much weeping, i.e. from martyrdom on behalf of G'd such as that of the 7 sons of Hannah. (Gittin 57)

5. Concerning the exile which commenced under Titus, when he destroyed the temple, the Psalmist speaks about our innumerable enemies, i.e. that not only Titus and the Romans under his command attacked us, but that their armies contained elements from all the nations, as is detailed in a report by Joseph ben Gurion. (a Jewish chronicler of the 10th century in a book called Jossipon)

Sonay chinam, they had no cause to hate me. The worst atrocities were the accusations that the 10 martyrs which included Rabbi Akiva had been held responsible for the sale of Joseph by his brothers, a deed for which they claimed the Torah demanded the death sentence. This was a trumped up charge.

Oyvay sheker, my enemies spread lies, demanded that I give back

ד יָגַעְתִּי בְקָרְאִי נָחַר גְּרוֹנִי כָּלוּ עֵינַי מְיַחֵל לֵאלֹהָי:
ה רַבּוּ מִשַּׂעֲרוֹת רֹאשִׁי שׂנְאַי חִנָּם עָצְמוּ מַצְמִיתַי אֹיְבַי
שֶׁקֶר אֲשֶׁר לֹא-גָזַלְתִּי אָז אָשִׁיב:
ו אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ לְאִוַּלְתִּי וְאַשְׁמוֹתַי מִמְּךָ לֹא-
נִכְחָדוּ:
ז אַל-יֵבֹשׁוּ בִי קוֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי יֱהוִה צְבָאוֹת אַל-יִכָּלְמוּ בִי
מְבַקְשֶׁיךָ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
ח כִּי-עָלֶיךָ נָשָׂאתִי חֶרְפָּה כִּסְּתָה כְלִמָּה פָנָי:

what I had not stolen. (compare Eycha Rabbah 2,2, and Midrash Tehillim 9,13)

6. Having made it clear that he speaks about all 4 exiles, the Psalmist now returns to his cry "save me O Lord" in verse 2.

He pleads that G'd should not say that Israel's sins had been the cause of its suffering, i.e. sins such as the bowing down to Nebuchadnezzar's image. "You know my foolishness", i.e. THAT sin was not committed willingly, I sinned unknowingly, and therefore I cannot confess details of such a sin. ***attah yadata***, only You know how I have sinned, not I. Regarding ***ashmotay*** my knowingly committed sins, ***mimcha lo nich-chadu***, though I may never have revealed them to others, from You they were never hidden, I always confessed them to You. Sins between man and G'd are NOT to be revealed to one's fellow man, as our sages explained in Yuma 86, based on Psalms 32,1, "hail those whose trespass is covered over".

7. Even though my repentance may have been inadequate for those sins I have been aware of, – for the ones that were due to my foolishness, the ones I am not aware of, I can only hope for Your salvation.

Please save me, so that those who have confidence that I will be helped will not feel ashamed and lose that confidence when they see that You do not save me, though my sins were inadvertent ones. They will all abandon hope for their own salvation. Similarly, regarding the intentional sins to which I have confessed and for which I ask pardon. Let not those who seek the G'd of Israel be embarrassed and conclude that You do not welcome repentant sinners.

8. Now about the image I bowed down to, concerning which decree I have said ***ba-u mayim ad nefesh***, that the waters have reached my very soul. This sin was so serious that even the gentiles

9I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my kin.
10My zeal for Your house has been my undoing: the reproaches of those who revile You have fallen upon me.
11When I wept and fasted, I was reviled for it.
12I made sackcloth my garment; I became a byword among them.
13Those who sit in the gate talk about me; I am the taunt of drunkards.
14As for me, may my prayer come to You, O LORD, at a favorable moment; O God, in Your abundant faithfulness, answer me with Your sure deliverance.

spat at me after they had seen the successful martyrdom of Chananyah Mishael and Azaryah, who emerged unscathed from the furnace. (Sanhedrin 93) I confess that I heaped shame upon You. I insulted Your honour. Even the gentiles could not understand how we, with a G'd such as You, could bow down to an idolatrous man made image. The public shame we have suffered for this from the nations, coupled with our repentance, should diminish the magnitude of our guilt.

The reasoning is comparable to what we have learned in Berachot 12, that Saul gained entrance to the section of the hereafter in which the prophet Samuel is at home, because he suffered public disgrace over the way in which he had killed the inhabitants of Nov, the city of priests. He had felt unworthy even to enquire through a High Priest by means of the *urim vetumim* if his battle against the Philistines would be victorious.

9. I was not only embarrassed because of the gentiles who spit in my face, says Israel, but also because of what my fellow Jews might have thought about me. True, it could be assumed that any Jew bowing to Nebuchadnezzar's image did so only for show, had no idolatrous thought. Since they did not communicate with each other about such subjects however, many may have harboured the suspicion that the next Jews did have idolatrous thoughts.

This makes my position *muzzar*, strange in the eyes of my brethren, since some may have suspected me of having become estranged to my mother's heritage. Those who were *achey beney avi*, brothers through my father, did not suspect me, they gave me the benefit of the doubt, still calling me a Jew, (Sanhedrin 44) but the *achey beney imi* were less generous in their interpretation of my obeisances to the idol, they thought I had left the fold. Since this is

ט מוּזָר הָיִיתִי לְאֶחָי וְנָכְרִי לִבְנֵי אִמִּי:
י כִּי-קִנְאַת בֵּיתְךָ אֲכָלָתְנִי וְחֶרְפּוֹת חוֹרְפֶיךָ נָפְלוּ עָלָי:
יא וָאֲבְכֶּה בַצּוֹם נַפְשִׁי וַתְּהִי לַחֲרָפוֹת לִי:
יב וָאֶתְּנָה לְבוּשִׁי שָׂק וָאֱהִי לָהֶם לְמָשָׁל:
יג יָשִׂיחוּ בִי יֹשְׁבֵי שָׁעַר וּנְגִינוֹת שׁוֹתֵי שֵׁכָר:
יד וַאֲנִי תְפִלָּתִי-לְךָ יְהוָה עֵת רָצוֹן אֱלֹהִים בְּרָב-חַסְדֶּךָ
עֲנֵנִי בֶּאֱמֶת יִשְׁעֶךָ:

so, they embarrassed me, forcing me to make excuses for my conduct.

10. The Jewish exiles in Babylon are still speaking, and they are saying that the burning shame of having seen the temple destroyed, the enemy successful, was still a fresh experience of humiliation suffered while in captivity. All of this had contributed to the error of making even a sham obeisance to Nebuchadnezzar's idol.

11. When faced with dangers to the body and dangers to the soul, the average person's concern for the survival of the body is greater than his concern about the dangers that face his soul. As a result, when he fasts and prays to ward off such danger, it is primarily because of his fears for his body. Israel says that it did the reverse. It fasted because of *nafshi*, because Nebuchadnezzar's decree had posed a threat to its soul. Self castigation and fasting resulted in *cherpati li*, I was suffering revulsion for this, my whole appearance was ruined.

12. I tried another way, namely wearing sackcloth, displaying mourning; still I only became a byword amongst them. They said (the enemy) that it is a bad omen for them. Slaves are not to wear garments of mourning except to mourn their masters or his troubles. They thought my garments symbolized what I wished on them, and they made me remove them.

13. Then I resorted to prayer. But I thought about what I could do to make the timing of my prayer coincide with an *et ratzon*, a moment of goodwill. I concluded that the most likely time for my prayer to be well received was at the time the gentiles gather socially in the square of the town *sha-ar* to converse, drink and compare me unfavorably when contrasted with their own well being.

14. At such a time, my prayer to You is liable to find *et ratzon*, a time of goodwill for me. This means that I hope to pinpoint the

15*Rescue me from the mire; let me not sink; let me be rescued from my enemies, and from the watery depths.*

moment *hashem*, the attribute of mercy asserts itself even while You are busy in displaying the attribute of justice, i.e. *elokim*.

Solomon, in Proverbs 24,17, warns "do not rejoice when your enemies collapse, and in verse 18 "lest G'd see it and is displeased".

Since my enemies are guilty of just this at the moment I offer my prayer, I hope to benefit from that timing. Still, such considerations, while helpful when the attribute of mercy is active, are not enough when the attribute of justice is in full reign. What can I do when my own sinful deeds are what makes the attribute of justice predominate?

Therefore, Israel says, I have to appeal to *rov chasdecha* that the abundance of Your kindness that is constantly present EVEN when the *midat hadin* is active, *anneyni* answer me! *Be-emet yishecha*, I know that the REAL salvation, *yeshuah* only comes when Your own *Shechinah* emerges from its self imposed exile. By doing so, i.e. *emet yishecha*, please *anneyni* answer me, save me in the process! (compare Megillah 29)

15. We had explained that the Psalmist described the Jewish condition at the time of the exile of the Medes (Ahasverus) as comparable to being sunk in mire, (verse 3) and that having briefly headlined each exile, the Psalmist is returning to them in greater detail. From this verse onwards, the Psalmist reverts to discussing the exile under the Medes, i.e. the troubles with Haman and his attempt to seduce the body of Israel into sinning at Ahasverus' banquet.

This represented an attempt to seduce the body of Israel, make it enjoy the forbidden foods, as we described in the Midrash quoting the conversation between Moses and Elijah.

At that time, Moses had told Elijah that if G'd's decree had been sealed in *tit*, mud. There was hope to reverse it through prayer. We explained in our commentary on *megillat* Esther 1,8, that all scholars are agreed that Israel had been guilty of both bowing to Haman's image i.e. idolatry, and of the partaking of forbidden food at the king's banquet. The disagreement between the scholars concerns only which sin was primary, and had caused G'd to seal the decree of destruction of the Jewish people.

Because of that, 2 redeemers were needed, as we have explained there.

The Psalmist refers here first of all to the sin of eating the forbidden foods after which he compares the sinner as standing

טו הַצִּילֵנִי מִטִּיט וְאַל-אֶטְבָּעָה אִנָּצְלָה מִשֹּׂנְאַי
וּמִמַּעֲמַקֵּי-מָיִם:

deeply mired in mud. This however, was a situation from which he could extricate himself, though with difficulty, by swimming and rising to the surface. However, if on top of being mired in mud he would be swamped by a whirlpool of water, his head would be hurt and numbed by the impact, and he would be swept away and drowned. This is precisely what the effect of bowing down to Haman's idol did.

The parable compares the Jews of Babylonia who had to bow to the image Nebuchadnezzar had constructed, with the Jews of Persia who had to bow to the image Haman had made.

Babylonia is called *metzullah* (Sanhedrin 93 based on the verse in Zachariah 1,8 "he was standing by the myrtle in the deep", i.e. *metzullah*) They were in deep waters but could have extricated themselves, since the waters in the parable were flowing very slowly. Besides, the Jews had bowed only for show, without inner conviction.

Later, during the exile under Haman/Ahasverus there came the *shibolet mayim*, the torrent of water, the whirlpool, i.e. the additional sin of eating from Ahasverus' banquet which mired them in the mud at the bottom of the water, i.e. *batit*.

To those who ask "how could a whole nation be consigned to death merely for having eaten from Ahasverus' banquet, the Psalmist explains that there had been two other reasons, each one serious. Firstly there was the enmity of both Haman and Ahasverus against the Jewish people. Our sages in Megillah 14 describe Ahasverus' antisemitism as worse than that of Haman. They compare the two to owners of two fields, one of which has a big hump in the middle. (making ploughing difficult). The other has a deep channel running through it, something his plough cannot cross. Each one is willing to pay to have the nuisance removed. Finally, the owner of the field with the channel says to the owner of the field with the hump "I wish you would sell me the hump." The owner of that field allows the other farmer to remove the hump free of charge.

When two people, each of whom is equipped with free will, are set to destroy the Jewish people, this in itself poses a problem for G'd, and a serious menace for the Jewish people. How could G'd deny man the exercise of his free will?

Secondly, there had been the sin of the idol described earlier as *ma-makey mayim* the deep waters in verse 3!

Therefore, the Psalmist exclaims 1) save me from the mud, i.e. the sin of having eaten from Ahasverus' banquet, so that I will not drown,

[16]Let the floodwaters not sweep me away; let the deep not swallow me; let the mouth of the Pit not close over me.
[17]Answer me, O LORD, according to Your great steadfastness; in accordance with Your abundant mercy turn to me;

ve-al etbe-ah, due to the decree having been sealed. Once I have been cleansed of THAT sin, I can be delivered, i.e. *inatzlah* from my enemies, even though they possess freedom of choice. I can also be cleansed from the sin of bowing to the image, since the only thing that caused me to drown in the mud was the turbulent waters, i.e. Haman's arranging for Israel to be invited to the banquet.

Once that sin, i.e. a sin committed knowingly in order to obtain physical gratification has been removed, the sin of bowing to the image which had been committed only for show, out of fear, could be forgiven through repentance.

16. This is why the Psalmist begs "do not let the turbulent waters sweep me away, let the deep swallow me". The deep can only swallow me, i.e. the sin of bowing to Nebuchadnezzar's image in Babylonia, if the sin of Ahasverus' banquet is NOT removed.

Next, the Psalmist explains how the free willed decisions of Haman and Ahasverus could be neutralized. He says "let the mouth of the well not close over me." Esther the righteous, is compared to a fountain of fresh water from which we all drink. She provides the counterweight to the king's freely made decision, and challenges it with her mouth, turning him against Haman. (Esther 7,3) In this way the king was turned into a friend of the Jews and became a counterweight to Haman the enemy. The king had Haman killed, and thus this major obstacle to salvation was removed.

The Psalmist therefore prays that Esther should not refuse to speak to the king on behalf of her people, i.e. *al te-tar...pi-ha*". The choice of the word *be-er* well, spring, shows that this explanation is more relevant than that of other commentators who treat the word as pit, in which case the Psalmist should have used the word *bor* instead of *be-er*. (Targum translates it as *gehinam*, purgatory.)

17. Let not those who hear me suspect that I put my hope and faith in a woman instead of in You. My confidence is her is based on the fact that she had found favour in the eyes of G'd, and that therefore, when the time came, she would find favour in the eyes of Ahasverus, and that salvation would proceed according to natural

טז אַל-תִּשְׁטְפֵנִי שִׁבֹּלֶת מַיִם וְאַל-תִּבְלָעֵנִי מְצוּלָה וְאַל
-תֶּאְטַר-עָלַי בְּאֵר פִּיהָ:
יז עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה כִּי-טוֹב חַסְדֶּךָ כְּרֹב רַחֲמֶיךָ פְּנֵה אֵלָי:

means. By emphasizing *ki tov chasdecha* i.e. Your kindness is good, the Psalmist demonstrates that G'd's kindness is greater than that of any human interlocutor, in this case Esther whose kindness Ahasverus appreciates.

David, i.e. Israel, says that when asked for her fountain not to be stopped up, I merely suggested that the rescue should be orchestrated by means of an innocent person, as our sages have said in Shabbat 32 et al. That the sin of the Jewish people is the reason G'd's *Shechinah* hides itself, as we know from Chullin 139, i.e. "how do we know Esther from the Torah?" answer "I will certainly hide My face, says G'd." (play on words *hasster astir* Deut. 31,18)

We have explained in our commentary on that verse that Esther experienced a withdrawal of Divine inspiration when she was forced to marry an uncircumcised person, and that when she appeared before the king, the *Shechinah* departed from her, since the king's room was filled with idolatrous images. The verse in the Torah however, suggests the reason to be that the sin of bowing to the *tzelem*, image, needed atonement, since although it had only been committed for show, it was still an obeisance to such a non deity. The reason G'd chose this very brief *hester panim*, "inspirational blackout" at the time of Haman, was to atone for the sin of Esther's ancestor Saul, who had sinned, allowing Haman's ancestor Agag to live an extra night instead of killing him immediately when capturing him. Had Agag been killed immediately, Haman would never have been born. (Megillah 13) His ancestor impregnated a woman during that fateful night.

It was Haman who had seduced Israel to bow before an idol, an overriding sin, more serious than the partaking of forbidden foods at the king's banquet. This is because the decree to bow to Haman's idol applied to all the Jews of the empire, not just the ones in Shushan.

David, speaking for Israel, says that if that sin which had not yet been atoned for, denied Esther the Divine inspiration, – *peney elay*, turn to me in Your great kindness, and grant me the Presence of Your *Shechinah*.

18. Do not withhold it from me. Even if I, i.e. Israel, deserve that You hide Your face from me, do it for the sake of Mordechai, i.e.

18*do not hide Your face from Your servant, for I am in distress; answer me quickly.*
19*Come near to me and redeem me; free me from my enemies.*
20*You know my reproach, my shame, my disgrace; You are aware of all my foes.*
21*Reproach breaks my heart, I am in despair; I hope for consolation, but there is none, for comforters, but find none.*

me-avdecha Your servant. Do not wait with the salvation till the 13th day of Adar (the day the decree to kill the Jews would become effective) (Esther 3,13) since I am in distress already now. *ve-ha-ir shushan navochah*, the city of Shushan was bewildered. (Esther 3,15) Compare Yalkut Shimoni item 1056 on this who explains that the gentiles were threatening Jews with immediate murder already immediately after the decree had been published.

19. Normally, when Israel in exile is threatened, the threat is against their physical lives. If they are prepared to give up their religion in favour of that of their host country, they could trade the threat to their physical lives by abandoning their spiritual lives instead. It is to the everlasting credit of the Jews at the time of Haman that no one did so. This is especially remarkable since many Persians when faced with the sudden political popularity of the Jews, changed their religion (or tried to) to become Jewish out of fear for their lives. (Esther 8,17)

kiddush hashem, i.e. martyrdom, means to make the integrity of one's soul more important than the integrity of one's body. Usually, the body falls victim, except in such instances (Pessachim 118) as Abraham whom Nimrod threw into a fiery furnace, Daniel in the den of lions, and Chananyah Mishael and Azaryah. (Daniel 6,17 and 3,25). In those instances G'd saved their bodies also. The Psalmist says *korvah el nafshi*, to bring my soul near to You, – since my enemies would jubilate over my fate, I ask You to also save my body and place them within MY power. This is what G'd had made happen to the men who had defamed Daniel. (Daniel 6,25)

20. The Psalmist, i.e. Israel, had previously agonized over the problem how G'd could cope with His principle of not interfering with man's, i.e. Haman's and Ahasverus' freedom of choice. The answer given was that Esther should use her talents to win the king over to her side and make him hate Haman.

Now, a second argument is advanced which should enable G'd to

יח וְאַל-תַּסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךָ מֵעַבְדֶּךָ כִּי-צַר-לִי מַהֵר עֲנֵנִי:
יט קָרְבָה אֶל-נַפְשִׁי גְּאָלָהּ לְמַעַן אֹיְבַי פְּדֵנִי:
כ אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ חֶרְפָּתִי וּבָשְׁתִּי וּכְלִמָּתִי נֶגְדְּךָ כָּל-צוֹרְרָי:
כא חֶרְפָּה שָׁבְרָה לִבִּי וָאָנוּשָׁה וָאֲקַוֶּה לָנוּד וָאַיִן
וְלַמְנַחֲמִים וְלֹא מָצָאתִי:

deal with Haman and Ahasverus. When Jews are persecuted, they serve as scapegoat for G'd whom the antisemite really rebels against. Israel says that all the shame and humiliation suffered by it were really due to it being "Your scapegoat", *negdecha kol tzorreray*, all my oppressors were really against You.

Since they have tried to get at You, – You do not need to consider that interfering with their freedom of action is interference with what they have planned against Me.

21. The Israelites exiled under the Medes are still speaking as one unit, i.e. address G'd in the singular. In our commentary on Megillat Esther, we explained why Esther did not tell the king about Haman's decree and her own Jewishness during the first banquet she had arranged for the king and Haman to attend in her palace.

We explained that the Jews of Shushan had enjoyed 7 days of feasting at the king's banquet (Esther 1,5) excluding the nights. It would have been impossible to go for 7 days and nights without sleep, especially for people who had eaten and drunk their fill. By observing 3 days and nights of continuous fasting, Esther had hoped that the Jews of Shushan could atone for 6 of the 7 days during which they had consumed forbidden foods. It turned out that on the third day of her fast, when she had asked the king and Haman to dinner, those 7 days had not yet been completely compensated for.

When the Jews of Shushan heard that Esther had invited the king and Haman for a second banquet, they assumed that Esther, instead of interceding on their behalf, had made common cause with the king and Haman. The *layla ha-hu*, the night preceding the second banquet became a very distressing night for the Jews of Shushan, especially since it came on the heels of 3 days of fasting. The food they had eaten to break their fast, instead of helping to restore their spirits, made them feel even worse. In this way, THAT night achieved atonement for the 7th day of Ahasverus' banquet which their 3 day fast had not yet achieved. After THAT night, Esther revealed to the king what it was she had risked her life for. On that day Israel experienced its salvation. Our verse describes the agony the Jewish

22*They give me gall for food, vinegar to quench my thirst.*
23*May their table be a trap for them, a snare for their allies.*
24*May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see; may their loins collapse continually.*
25*Pour out Your wrath on them; may Your blazing anger overtake them;*
26*may their encampments be desolate; may their tents stand empty.*
27*For they persecute those You have struck; they talk about the pain of those You have felled.*
28*Add that to their guilt; let them have no share of Your beneficence;*

people suffered during that interval when they had believed that Esther had abandoned her mission. They had expressed their shame that even the 3 day and 3 night fast had not produced the salvation.

The *menachamim*, i.e. Mordechai and Esther who they had relied on, *lo matzati* Israel had not found to be effective during that interval.

22. This verse describes how the meal they ate when they broke their fast had gall added to it, and how their drink tasted like vinegar.

23. They expressed fear that *shulchanam*, i.e. the table at which Haman and Esther would sit at the second banquet, would prove to become a "net", i.e. *pach*. In fact however, it became a *mokesh*, trap for those who had considered themselves safe, i.e. for Haman and his henchmen.

24. Continuing this theme, the Psalmist refers to aspects of the vision Abraham had at the *brit beyn habetarim*, (Bereshit Rabbah 44,17) when G'd had shown him the 4 empires which would enslave Israel in the future. The first exile Abraham had visualized as *eymah*, fear, the second, that of the Medes as *chashecha*, darkness. The Psalmist here refers to this darkness as *tech-shachna eyneyehm merot*, their eyes became too dark to see, and correspondingly, their loins trembled constantly.

25. Having concluded speaking about the exile under the Medes, the Psalmist turns to the Greek exile, that under Antiochus. This had been referred to in verse 4 as *yagati be-kor-i*.... "I have become worn out in calling...to my Lord". Because, during that exile Israel had to undergo exceptional suffering, Israel asks that G'd "pour out Your wrath over them".

Since, as a result of the brief *za-am*, anger of G'd, the victim would

כג וַיִּתְּנוּ בְרוֹתִי רֹאשׁ וְלִצְמָאִי יַשְׁקוּנִי חֹמֶץ:
כד יְהִי-שֻׁלְחָנָם לִפְנֵיהֶם לְפָח וְלִשְׁלוֹמִים לְמוֹקֵשׁ:
כה תֶּחְשַׁכְנָה עֵינֵיהֶם מֵרְאוֹת וּמָתְנֵיהֶם תָּמִיד הַמְעַד:
כו שְׁפָךְ-עֲלֵיהֶם זַעְמֶךָ וַחֲרוֹן אַפְּךָ יַשִּׂיגֵם:
כז תְּהִי-טִירָתָם נְשָׁמָה בְּאָהֳלֵיהֶם אַל-יְהִי יֹשֵׁב:
כח כִּי-אַתָּה אֲשֶׁר-הִכִּיתָ רָדָפוּ וְאֶל-מַכְאוֹב חֲלָלֶיךָ יְסַפֵּרוּ:
כט תְּנָה-עָוֹן עַל-עֲוֹנָם וְאַל-יָבֹאוּ בְּצִדְקָתֶךָ:

die instantly, without experiencing the pain of retribution, Israel adds *va-charon apcha yasigem* "do not let them die until the feel of Your burning anger has overtaken them".

26. As a retribution for their having desecrated the holy temple, the encampment of G'd, make their encampment, i.e. *tiratam* desolate, so that they cannot dwell in their own tents. Since the temple had not been destroyed by them, Israel asks that THEIR habitations should only be unfit to dwell in; it does not ask for destruction of their dwellings.

27. Having discussed 3 of the 4 exiles, the Psalmist now turns to the 4th exile, the exile under the domination of Edom. Concerning that exile, the Psalmist had said in verse 5, that those who hate us without cause, are "more numerous than the hairs on my head". The reason the Psalmist mentions this is so that they could not refer to Isaac's prediction in Genesis 27,40– (Bereshit Rabbah 63,7) where his meaning is supposed to be that when Jacob throws off the yoke of the Torah, Esau will have dominion over him.

In other words, Edom had been predestined to become the whip with which Israel would be punished. The Psalmist goes on record that far from executing G'd's command, those enemies had acted in order to ANGER G'd. They had not maltreated Israel in order to FULFIL G'd's wishes. All those people *radfu*, pursued those whom You had already smitten, i.e. *hikita*; the ones "YOU have slain". They brag as if it had been their doing, and not Your will that those people were killed.

28. Even when dealing with the gentile nations, G'd does not usually add one guilt to another. If the Psalmist discusses 2 separate sins, why does he not say *tenah avon al avon* instead of saying (mixing the singular with the plural) *tenah avon al avonam*?

29*may they be erased from the book of life, and not be inscribed with the righteous.*
30*But I am lowly and in pain; Your help, O God, keeps me safe.*
31*I will extol God's name with song, and exalt Him with praise.*
32*That will please the LORD more than oxen, than bulls with horns and hooves.*
33*The lowly will see and rejoice; you who are mindful of God, take heart!*

One of the ways in which G'd displays His righteousness is that He is *ma-avir rishon al rishon* etc., (Yuma 86, Rosh Hashanah 17) i.e. that when totalling up our sins, He disregards the first sin, and so on until there is a 4th sin. Only then does He count and compiles a register. Israel asks that G'd should count already the first sin *avon* and *avonam* the next two, in the case of the Edomites who enslave us cruelly. They should not qualify for G'd's usual display of righteousness.

29. Through this stratagem they would be blotted out from the book of life if they had been inscribed for life on Rosh Hashanah only just. By adding their first sin to the scales of sins already counted, the scale would tilt downwards and their doom would be sealed, i.e. their debits and merits respectively would now be reversed.

On the other hand, if they have not yet been inscribed due to their merits and debits being in balance, do not let them be inscribed with Your *tzaddikim*, i.e. *betzidkatecha*.

30. Israel, describing its own state of mind during that exile, admits that it is itself short of merits, *mitzvot*, i.e. is *ani*, poor. Also, due to the many torments suffered and the length of the exile, I am full of pain; therefore I am not in the frame of mind to repent my sins properly, and my only hope is Your salvation, which will be initiated by You, i.e. when Your *Shechinah* re-emerges from the exile it has imposed on itself. When that occurs, *tesagveni*, You will elevate me as a result.

Alternately, – my pains, *ko-ev*, and my poverty, *ani*, are the afflictions which will qualify me for Your *yeshuah*, salvation.

31. Having said that the *Shechinah*'s salvation will also elevate Israel, Israel promises to respond in two ways. 1) I will compose a new song for the "redemption" of the *Shechinah*, and I will offer sacrifices for my own salvation.

כט יִמָּחוּ מִסֵּפֶר חַיִּים וְעִם צַדִּיקִים אַל-יִכָּתֵבוּ׃
ל וַאֲנִי עָנִי וְכוֹאֵב יְשׁוּעָתְךָ אֱלֹהִים תְּשַׂגְּבֵנִי׃
לא אֲהַלְלָה שֵׁם-אֱלֹהִים בְּשִׁיר וַאֲגַדְּלֶנּוּ בְתוֹדָה׃
לב וְתִיטַב לַיהוָה מִשּׁוֹר פָּר מַקְרִן מַפְרִיס׃
לג רָאוּ עֲנָוִים יִשְׂמָחוּ דֹּרְשֵׁי אֱלֹהִים וִיחִי לְבַבְכֶם׃

G'd will consider the "thanks" I give for my own salvation as more important than the song I will compose and sing to the name *elokim*, since the song is merely a matter of offering praise.

Of greater importance are the thanksgiving offerings I will present to G'd, since by such an ACT, I will add greater stature to the image of G'd in people's eyes *Agadlenu betodah*, I will make Him great by thanksgiving offerings.

We have a similar thought expressed by Moses in Numbers 14,17 when he says "I have filled the spirit of G'd with power", i.e. I have encouraged Him to release His bountiful blessings" The idea is exactly the reverse of Deuteronomy 32,18 *tzur yelodcha teshi*, when Israel's ungrateful conduct is blamed for "weakening" its G'd, i.e. His preparedness to dispense this bountiful blessing.

32. This kind of offering is far more pleasing to G'd than the bulls that have to atone for sins committed previously. The simile of comparing horns and hooves is based on Chullin 60, in which we are told that the first bull offered by Adam had only one horn and that it protruded beyond its hooves. This means that the horn which symbolized the sin, preceded the hooves, i.e. the means of atonement for that sin by killing a bull. When offering *todah*, thanksgiving offerings, no sin needs to be recalled.

33. Now the holy spirit responds to Israel's statement that due to its poverty and painful experiences it cannot repent properly and cannot claim merits of its own to secure its salvation, that only the re-emergence of the *Shechinah* can save it.

The holy spirit compliments Israel on its concern for the *galut shechinah*, the self imposed exile of the Presence of G'd, and it refers to them as *anavim*, humble ones. They will yet rejoice when the *Shechinah* re-emerges. Even those who will not live to see it, i.e. *ra-u*, but are *dorshey elokim*, concerned about the exile of the *Shechinah*, *vi-yechi levavchem*, your hearts which were considered like dead due to your suffering, will revive.

34*For the LORD listens to the needy, and does not spurn*
His captives.
35*Heaven and earth shall extol Him, the seas, and all*
that moves in them.
36*For God will deliver Zion and rebuild the cities of*
Judah; they shall live there and inherit it;
37*the offspring of His servants shall possess it; those*
who cherish His name shall dwell there.

70 *For the leader. Of David.* Lehazkir.
2*Hasten, O God, to save me; O LORD, to aid me!*
3*Let those who seek my life be frustrated and disgraced;*
let those who wish me harm, fall back in shame.
4*Let those who say, "Aha! Aha!" turn back because of*
their frustration.

34. For G'd taught us the principle that if someone prays for his friend to receive G'd's help, in a matter that he himself is in need of, the supplicant's needs will be fulfilled by G'd on a priority basis. (Baba Kama 94, based on Sarah conceiving as a result of Abraham praying for the women in the household of Avimelech. (Genesis 20,18 and 21,1)

This is why the holy spirit i.e. G'd says "G'd listens to the destitute", those who pray for others' needs though destitute themselves. First He redeems the *evyonim*, the exiled Jewish people; only afterwards does He not despise the *assirav* His exiled *Shechinah*, His entourage. (Ezekiel 1)

35. The reason the beasts of the field are asked to praise G'd is that through providing water for Israel while in the desert as we read in Isaiah 43,20, "the wild beast shall honour Me.. for I provide water in the desert", also the beast benefited and ought to praise G'd for that.

36. The praise is due to G'd who will bring salvation to Zion and rebuild the cities of Yehudah and they will dwell there. It will be an inheritance even though the rest of the world will NOT be settled. This is a promise that goes far beyond the redemption from previous exiles.

37. The whole earth is expected to praise the Lord, even if they do not derive DIRECT benefit from that redemption. Since, however, without Israel the rest of the world would not endure, they still have reason to praise Israel's redemption.

לד כִּי-שֹׁמֵעַ אֶל-אֶבְיוֹנִים יְהוָה וְאֶת-אֲסִירָיו לֹא בָזָה:
לה יְהַלְלוּהוּ שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ יַמִּים וְכָל-רֹמֵשׂ בָּם:
לו כִּי אֱלֹהִים יוֹשִׁיעַ צִיּוֹן וְיִבְנֶה עָרֵי יְהוּדָה וְיָשְׁבוּ שָׁם
וִירֵשׁוּהָ:
לז וְזֶרַע עֲבָדָיו יִנְחָלוּהָ וְאֹהֲבֵי שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁכְּנוּ-בָהּ:

ע א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד לְהַזְכִּיר:
ב אֱלֹהִים לְהַצִּילֵנִי יְהוָה לְעֶזְרָתִי חוּשָׁה:
ג יֵבֹשׁוּ וְיַחְפְּרוּ מְבַקְשֵׁי נַפְשִׁי יִסֹּגוּ אָחוֹר וְיִכָּלְמוּ חֲפֵצֵי
רָעָתִי:
ד יָשׁוּבוּ עַל-עֵקֶב בָּשְׁתָּם הָאֹמְרִים הֶאָח הֶאָח:

Psalm 70

1. The Yalkut Shimoni on this verse relates that Rabbi Chisda explained this verse by means of a parable. A king had a flock and became angered at it. He therefore expelled the flock, demolished the sheep's pens and expelled their shepherd. After a while, the king relented, took back his flock, built new sheep pens, but did not recall the shepherd. The shepherd, becoming aware of this, asked the king why he was the only one not favoured. This is what is meant by *le-david le-haskir*. David, who is supposed to be Israel's shepherd, asks to be remembered.

2. The Psalmist says that since *elokim*, i.e. the attribute of justice is ready to save me, one could not ask what need is there for the attribute of mercy in such a situation. He answers *Hashem le-ezrati chusha*, when the attribute of mercy is present also, it speeds up the process of salvation.

3. When both categories of my enemies will observe how You hasten to my aid, i.e. both *mevakshey nafshi*, those who want me dead, as well as *chafeytzey ra-ati*, those who wish me ill, but do not necessarily want me dead, they will retreat, i.e. do *teshuvah*, repent. The others, those who had wished me ill, *yikalmu*, will feel ashamed.

4. Repentance is not wholly spontaneous and requires a heavenly assist. (Shabbat 104, Yuma 38) Man, however, must make the FIRST move. David prays that his enemies should commence to do *teshuvah* in order to qualify for this heavenly assist.

[5]*But let all who seek You be glad and rejoice in You; let those who are eager for Your deliverance always say, "Extolled be God!"*
[6]*But I am poor and needy; O God, hasten to me! You are my help and my rescuer; O LORD, do not delay.*

71 *I seek refuge in You, O LORD; may I never be disappointed.*
[2]*As You are beneficent, save me and rescue me; incline Your ear to me and deliver me.*

The catalyst will be when they observe how You help me; the follow up, their shame for having wanted me dead or suffering. The reversal of their expectations which had commenced with *he-ach*, jubilation over my difficulties, will cause their shame and trigger their *teshuvah*, repentance.

When someone feels ashamed because of his guilt, that is an early stage of repentance. We know this from Saul, who felt so ashamed at his rash killing of the priests in Nov that later on he did not dare approach a High Priest to enquire through him if his battle against the Philistines would be victorious. His place in heaven was saved because of this display of humiliation over his sin. (Berachot 12) David's enemies may be able to repent because of the shame that overcomes them when G'd shows them David's salvation. The reason the word *he-ach* is repeated is because it refers to both categories of David's enemies.

5. So far, the subject has been David's rescue from his present personal troubles, concerning which he had requested that it should occur through the *midat harachamim*, attribute of mercy. Now he speaks of the whole nation who will be beneficiaries of the future redemption. The retribution that the attribute of justice will execute on the pagan enemies of the Jewish people, will bring joy and happiness to all those who seek You out, when You save them.

This is all the more so since they do not seek You out for their personal benefit, but they delight in Your redemption, i.e. their constant longing had been that Your *Shechinah* which is in self imposed exile should be redeemed, should re-emerge visible to all. This is what the principal meaning of *elokim* is all about. These people's concern had always been *yigdal elokim*, that G'd's greatness be recognized all over the earth in the near future. To the

ה יָשִׂישׂוּ וְיִשְׂמְחוּ בְךָ כָּל-מְבַקְשֶׁיךָ וְיֹאמְרוּ תָמִיד יִגְדַּל
אֱלֹהִים אֹהֲבֵי יְשׁוּעָתֶךָ:
ו וַאֲנִי עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן אֱלֹהִים חוּשָׁה-לִּי עֶזְרִי וּמְפַלְטִי
אָתָּה יְהוָה אַל-תְּאַחַר:

עא א בְּךָ-יְהוָה חָסִיתִי אַל-אֵבוֹשָׁה לְעוֹלָם:
ב בְּצִדְקָתְךָ תַצִּילֵנִי וּתְפַלְּטֵנִי הַטֵּה-אֵלַי אָזְנְךָ
וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנִי:

same extent that salvation by means of the attribute of justice is NOT welcome at this time, in the future it is most important that it should be orchestrated through the attribute of justice.

6. David, – who as Messiah had been described as *ani*, poor, adds that not only the people, but also he on his own account asks that *elokim* should hasten the redemption of HIS *Shechinah* quickly, though he himself is in personal need of immediate rescue. He expresses confidence that his very concern for the redemption of the *Shechinah* will also hasten *ezri*, my own personal rescue. The fact that the holy spirit did not mention me separately in the previous Psalm is an indication to me that my personal redemption will be due to *elokim*.

This is the level on which the *Shechinah* relates to David. We know from Bereshit Rabbah 94,9, that anyone who rebels against the kingdom of David is equated with someone who rebels against the *Shechinah*. David's major concern at this time is that the redemption would be long in coming, due to lack of merit on the part of Israel. Therefore, he once again turns to the attribute of mercy not to delay the redemption, and to make its prompt occurrence an act of mercy.

Psalm 71

1. A number of commentators believe that this Psalm deals with David's experiences when pursued by his son Absalom. In particular, Rabbi David Kimchi understands David to say that he is certain that even without special prayer on his part, "You G'd whom I have always put my faith in, will not disappoint me".

2. But I am still anxious to express my feelings with my mouth, and that You should listen to my words. By Your righteousness You

> [3]*Be a sheltering rock for me to which I may always repair; decree my deliverance, for You are my rock and my fortress.*
> [4]*My God, rescue me from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and the lawless.*
> [5]*For You are my hope, O Lord GOD, my trust from my youth.*
> [6]*While yet unborn, I depended on You; in the womb of my mother, You were my support; I sing Your praises always.*

will save me from death, and You will let me escape from the troubles through decrees made *le-maalah*, in heaven. I plead that whatever escape I will have down here should not take place until it has been so decreed in heaven, i.e. not until You have heard my prayer. This is why David says *hatey oznecha*, incline Your ear, similar to the verse in Psalms 21,3 *areshet sefatav al manata selah*, You have not withheld from him the request of his lips. Had You already EXECUTED my escape, I would not have prayed.

3. I request another thing from You, namely that my escape should not be made possible through some agent of Yours, but should emanate from You directly, i.e. *heyeh li*.

Thirdly, I request that You do not be the kind of refuge for me that shields me only from my back, like a *sela*, rock, but that You should be a *tzur ma-on* a rock that is fortress like, in which one can feel secure against attack from all sides.

A fourth request is that this *ma-on* home like refuge, should be available to me not only during times of crisis and danger, when one hides in it because of fear from a pursuing enemy; it should be available at all times, i.e. this quality of Yours should be manifest constantly. I want to be able *lavo tamid* to have constant access to the inner chambers of Your holiness.

Granted that such holiness is of bottomless depth; after all G'd is not like the interior of a house the innermost point of which is easily located. People who have achieved a measure of holiness, can continue to probe G'd's holiness daily for 1000 years without ever reaching its core. It is simply endless. David asks *lavo tamid*, to enter constantly i.e. he is aware that when probing holiness, one remains at the entrance, so to speak.

After having completed the list of his requests, he says *tzivita lehoshieyni*, so far You have commanded others to save me, i.e. by means of a *sela*.

ג הֱיֵה לִי לְצוּר-מָעוֹן לָבוֹא תָּמִיד צִוִּיתָ לְהוֹשִׁיעֵנִי כִּי-
סַלְעִי וּמְצוּדָתִי אָתָּה:
ד אֱלֹהַי פַּלְּטֵנִי מִיַּד רָשָׁע מִכַּף מְעַוֵּל וְחוֹמֵץ:
ה כִּי-אַתָּה תִקְוָתִי אֲדֹנָי יֱהוִה מִבְטַחִי מִנְּעוּרָי:
ו עָלֶיךָ נִסְמַכְתִּי מִבֶּטֶן מִמְּעֵי אִמִּי אַתָּה גוֹזִי בְּךָ
תְהִלָּתִי תָמִיד:

The reason I am not satisfied with this, says David, is, that since I am still exposed to attack, I may have to kill my attackers in self defence. When I said *lavo tamid*, it means that even when I was in a refuge, a fortress, *metzudah* that was secure from ALL sides, such a refuge was only to protect me during times of troubles.

This is the meaning of *metzudati attah*, as opposed to *ma-on lavo tamid*.

4. Our sages interpret Psalms 37,32 *tzofeh rasha latzadik*, the wicked keeps a lookout for the righteous, as referring to the evil urge. Similarly here, the Psalmist says "save me from the evil urge whose provocations are worse than those of my adversaries of flesh and blood." The letter *mem* in *mikaf* means "more than", just as it does in *hatovah mimenah*, who is better than she. (Esther 1,19).

5. For I am not afraid of a human being because You are my hope ever since You have assured me "you will not die, but I will cause evil to rise from your own house". (Samuel II 12,13) This teaches me that though he will cause me anguish, he will not kill me. Besides, I have assurances from You G'd dating back much further and extending well into the future, as mentioned at the beginning of David's kingdom. (Samuel II 7,19)

6. I have also relied on You since birth, seeing that I have not been stillborn but received the allocation of a life span on earth, deducted from Adam's and Abraham's. (compare our commentary on Psalms 2,7) They, the patriarchs gave me 70 years of their own lives. David consoles himself with the thought that if he were to be killed, the supernatural efforts to grant him 70 years on this earth would have been in vain. Because I had to rely on You from the moment I came out of my mother's womb – and not on father and mother; only You are my *tehillah*, I give praise to.

7. My very existence is like a miracle to many, i.e. You, by keeping me alive, have performed miracles with me all the time, and rescued me from many troubles and dangers. Even if I had possessed

7I have become an example for many, since You are my mighty refuge.
8My mouth is full of praise to You, glorifying You all day long.
9Do not cast me off in old age; when my strength fails, do not forsake me!
10For my enemies talk against me; those who wait for me are of one mind,
11saying, "God has forsaken him; chase him and catch him, for no one will save him!"
12O God, be not far from me; my God, hasten to my aid!

thousands of merits, I would have exhausted them long ago. I must conclude therefore that You wanted to demonstrate miracles to others and that is why You have kept me alive.

My continued existence is a demonstration of Your greatness and how You supervise the fate of individuals.

David says that his existence goes beyond being an example of G'd's *hashgachah*, personal benevolent providence. G'd had shown him favour, he had personally found grace in G'd's eyes, i.e. *ve-attah machsi oz*, AND You are MY strong refuge, You have provided ME with strength.

8. Having stated that G'd had given him assurances since birth, and how he had relied on G'd since his youth, David worries that those who hear him may think that he contents himself with praising G'd and thanking Him for His kindness in general, without bothering to detail any of those instances.

Therefore, David says that this is not so, but that his mouth is full of G'd's praises and that even if were to praise G'd for only a single act of salvation all day long, that would still not be enough. It would not be an exaggeration. It is not like thanks and praises a subject expresses to his human ruler. Then, an exaggerated amount of praise or gratitude turns into something else, i.e. satire. It is no longer an honour for such a king but a disgrace.

David says that G'd is not like a human king, and the favours that G'd dispenses are in a different league entirely from those dispensed by human kings. Hence there can be no question of gratitude and the expression thereof becoming excessive.

9. There are two kinds of enemy a person may have ot face. One is the enemy that threatens the body, the other the enemy that threatens his soul. The latter are the negative forces created by a person's sins which yearn for the sinner's death. Whether a person

ז כְּמוֹפֵת הָיִיתִי לָרַבִּים וְאַתָּה מַחְסִי-עֹז:
ח יִמָּלֵא פִי תְהִלָּתֶךָ כָּל-הַיּוֹם תִּפְאַרְתֶּךָ:
ט אַל-תַּשְׁלִיכֵנִי לְעֵת זִקְנָה כִּכְלוֹת כֹּחִי אַל-תַּעַזְבֵנִי:
י כִּי-אָמְרוּ אוֹיְבַי לִי וְשֹׁמְרֵי נַפְשִׁי נוֹעֲצוּ יַחְדָּו:
יא לֵאמֹר אֱלֹהִים עֲזָבוֹ רִדְפוּ וְתִפְשׂוּהוּ כִּי-אֵין מַצִּיל:
יב אֱלֹהִים אַל-תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנִּי אֱלֹהַי לְעֶזְרָתִי חִישָׁה:

falls into the hands of those enemies that wish to kill his body, depends to a large extent on those enemies of his soul. Furthermore, we know from Yuma 88, that G'd watches over the feet of His devout ones, steering them away from sin.

One could argue that since the evil urge becomes weaker in a person when he becomes old, G'd no longer needs to protect such a person against sin. A person's freedom of choice at such an age should suffice to keep him from sinning, and that if G'd maintains His *shmirah* protective watch over such an elderly person, such person would in effect do NOTHING to resist sin, and could therefore not claim credit for a blameless lifestyle.

Since David had spoken in the previous verses about the great provocations his enemies had subjected him to, he asks that now that he is approaching old age, G'd should not abandon him to his enemies.

The reason he asks now is that though his own power, *koach* to sin is diminished, he is not at all certain of his ability to resist sin even when aging without a heavenly assist. Hence, *al tashlicheyni* literally "do not throw me" (into the hands of the evil urge).

10. For as long as the enemies of my soul are around, the enemies of my body have a chance to subdue me, *noatzu yachdav*, they are like counseling each other.

11. My enemies say that now that G'd has abandoned me, seeing that my body is in flight for its life, they assume that due to my old age G'd has withdrawn His protection and would fall victim to sin. Therefore, they think I cannot escape Absalom. If You G'd abandon me now, it is as if You had literally thrown me to them.

12. To the argument that if I have committed the kind of sins which endanger my soul, how could I possibly escape death at the hands of my pursuers, David says that one must distinguish between two different kinds of salvations.

One is the rescue only from death, which however, does not save

[13]Let my accusers perish in frustration; let those who seek my ruin be clothed in reproach and disgrace!
[14]As for me, I will hope always, and add to the many praises of You.
[15]My mouth tells of Your beneficence, of Your deliverance all day long, though I know not how to tell it.
[16]I come with praise of Your mighty acts, O Lord GOD; I celebrate Your beneficence, Yours alone.
[17]You have let me experience it, God, from my youth; until now I have proclaimed Your wondrous deeds,
[18]and even in hoary old age do not forsake me, God, until I proclaim Your strength to the next generation,
[19]Your mighty acts, to all who are to come, Your beneficence, high as the heavens, O God, You who have done great things; O God, who is Your peer!

one from *yissurim*, afflictions. The other is total salvation which frees one also from afflictions. David says that what he requests is that *elokim*, the attribute of justice should not depart from him. He is willing to continue to suffer afflictions to a degree. All he wants to be saved from is death, therefore, "hasten to my aid"!

13. As long as he is saved from death, everything will be all right. The remaining afflictions will blot out his sins, those who HATE my very life will be shamed and progressively consumed, *yichlu*, i.e. those negative forces created by my sins will cease to exist since G'd will hasten to aid me, all those who wish me ill will be covered with shame.

14. However, though I asked for speedy help, – if the help is slow in coming, I will not despair in the meantime, but *tamid ayachel* I will constantly continue to hope and add to my praises for you. I would conclude that the delay in Your help materializing is due to a sin which has taken longer to be blotted out, or until I had done something to compensate for that sin.

15. The way in which I add to Your praises, *tehillot* (verse 8) is by telling of Your *tzidkatecha*, Your righteousness. The reason I do so in the singular is that if I were to catalogue a list of Your righteous actions and the salvations You have performed, I could not possibly list them all. They are innumerable, beyond my ability to list. Therefore also *teshuatecha*, with the singular spelling. I have to lump them all together under one heading.

16. If I say that I cannot now enumerate ALL Your righteous

כג יֵבֹשׁוּ יִכָּלְמוּ שֹׂטְנֵי נַפְשִׁי יַעֲטוּ חֶרְפָּה וּכְלִמָּה מְבַקְשֵׁי רָעָתִי:

כד וַאֲנִי תָּמִיד אֲיַחֵל וְהוֹסַפְתִּי עַל-כָּל-תְּהִלָּתֶךָ:

כה פִּי יְסַפֵּר צִדְקָתֶךָ כָּל-הַיּוֹם תְּשׁוּעָתֶךָ כִּי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי סְפֹרוֹת:

כו אָבוֹא בִּגְבֻרוֹת אֲדֹנָי יֱהוִה אַזְכִּיר צִדְקָתְךָ לְבַדֶּךָ:

כז אֱלֹהִים לִמַּדְתַּנִי מִנְּעוּרָי וְעַד-הֵנָּה אַגִּיד נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ:

כח וְגַם עַד-זִקְנָה וְשֵׂיבָה אֱלֹהִים אַל-תַּעַזְבֵנִי עַד-אַגִּיד זְרוֹעֲךָ לְדוֹר לְכָל-יָבוֹא גְּבוּרָתֶךָ:

כט וְצִדְקָתְךָ אֱלֹהִים עַד-מָרוֹם אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתָ גְּדֹלוֹת אֱלֹהִים מִי כָמוֹךָ:

deeds etc. this is not because of temporary mental inability; rather even when I will again be Your shepherd, as per Ezekiel, at a time when my knowledge will be greatly expanded, since the prophet says that "the whole earth will be filled with knowledge of the Lord" (Isaiah 11,9), the same will certainly hold true for David. Still, even then I will not realize all the rescues I have experienced, and cannot thank You adequately. *avo bigvurot*, in the future I will come equipped with knowledge of Your mighty deeds. Still, I will have to mention them only as *tzidkatcha* a single comprehensive term for Your righteousness. I will not even be able to separate those *gevurot* performed by different attributes of Yours, such as *elokim* and *hashem*.

Alternately, – though I myself may have performed some acts of righteousness and charity in my time, I will mention ONLY Your righteousness.

17. From my early youth, – You Lord have taught me to spread the word about Your marvellous deeds.

18. The reason I ask that You do not forsake me till my old age is to enable me to tell the next generation that what You have performed then and what You are performing now are all part of one integrated great *gevurah*, mighty deed, they are not separate acts independent and unrelated to one another.

19. Having described how G'd performs acts of *tzedek*, righteousness, charity, for His people out of loving concern for them,

20*You who have made me undergo many troubles and misfortunes will revive me again, and raise me up from the depths of the earth.*
21*You will grant me much greatness, You will turn and comfort me.*
22*Then I will acclaim You to the music of the lyre for Your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing a hymn to You with a harp, O Holy One of Israel.*
23*My lips shall be jubilant, as I sing a hymn to You, my whole being, which You have redeemed.*
24*All day long my tongue shall recite Your beneficent acts, how those who sought my ruin were frustrated and disgraced.*

David adds that G'd's *tzedek* extends only up to *marom*, the high regions. The region in which the angels are at home does not benefit from that *tzedek*. The angels, of course, are not in need of it. All of this proves that those people who perform His will are central to the universe, are of the greatest importance to Him.

This does not mean that what is in the celestial regions is of secondary significance relative to what is in our part of the universe. Whatever great feats G'd performs in those regions, we can extol only in the most general terms, such as to proclaim G'd's incomparable nature, i.e. *elokim mi kamocha*, Lord, who can compare to You?"

20. By having experienced many *yissurim*, afflictions, You have not only restored me to life down here at the time of the resurrection, but You will once more elevate me *ta-aleyni* to the higher regions, i.e. *marom*.

The *ma-alot*, spiritual elevations, acquired by means of afflictions in this world are very great, are the direct result of the deep *tehomot* depressions experienced down here on earth. They cause our sins to be blotted out and enable us to qualify for eventual resurrection.

21. G'd's additional favour consists of the fact that my suffering is not only for the sake of my eventual ascent to heaven and resurrection when the time comes, but You even turn to me and comfort me concerning these afflictions.

This is similar to the prophet (Isaiah 40,1) exclaiming "comfort, comfort My people... it is I who comfort you". Also in Isaiah 66,10 we read that G'd comforts man "like a man who is comforted by his mother".

כ אֲשֶׁר הִרְאִיתַנִו צָרוֹת רַבּוֹת וְרָעוֹת תָּשׁוּב תְּחַיֵּינוּ
וּמִתְּהוֹמוֹת הָאָרֶץ תָּשׁוּב תַּעֲלֵנוּ:
כא תֶּרֶב גְּדֻלָּתִי וְתִסֹּב תְּנַחֲמֵנִי:
כב גַּם-אֲנִי אוֹדְךָ בִכְלִי-נֵבֶל אֲמִתְּךָ אֱלֹהָי אֲזַמְּרָה לְךָ
בְכִנּוֹר קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:
כג תְּרַנֵּנָה שְׂפָתַי כִּי אֲזַמְּרָה-לָּךְ וְנַפְשִׁי אֲשֶׁר פָּדִיתָ:
כד גַּם-לְשׁוֹנִי כָּל-הַיּוֹם תֶּהְגֶּה צִדְקָתֶךָ כִּי-בֹשׁוּ כִּי-
חָפְרוּ מְבַקְשֵׁי רָעָתִי:

There is no greater charity than to be comforted by G'd as one is comforted by one's mother. Seeing that this applies both to David himself and to the Jewish people, David says (in this case in the plural) ***assita gedolot***, You did great THINGS, immeasurably great.

22. Having said that his sufferings and Israel's sufferings are the reason there will be a resurrection and an ascent in Israel's future, it is obvious that Israel will give thanks. But David too, in a personal capacity, because he is alive, will give thanks for this revival with stringed instruments, proclaim G'd's truth, i.e. the fact that G'd will be recognized as David's G'd, ***elokay***. Even though I have called you now, says David, I have not achieved that G'd is referred to as "my G'd", as had the patriarchs of whom we say 3 times daily in the opening lines of our prayers "the G'd of Abraham, the G'd of Isaac and the G'd of Jacob".

In the future, when David will have acquired an additional dimension of holiness, "Your" truth, i.e. that You are "MY" G'd will become evident and "I will jubilate to You with the harp, Holy One of Israel". I will then do so to the accompaniment of the ***kinor***, a more sophisticated instrument than a mere ***nevel***.

23. My lips will be jubilant, – though they are made of flesh and blood. On the other hand, my soul will jubilate because through my song you have redeemed my soul, i.e. Adam's soul which had been defiled in ***gan eden***. We know that David's hymns have redeemed his soul from Psalms 92,2 "it is good.. to sing hymns to Your name". This Psalm is credited to having been composed by Adam, as we explained in our commentary on that verse.

24. The praise that emanates from the tongue is more significant than that which emanates merely from the lips. Therefore, David adds that of course, his tongue is busy extolling G'd's righteousness.

72 *Of Solomon.*
O God, endow the king with Your judgments, the king's son with Your righteousness;
2that he may judge Your people rightly, Your lowly ones, justly.

Those who seek to harm me, the men with Absalom will be ashamed and they will be disgraced. Actually, if David's tongue sings G'd's praises, his lips do so automatically, and even more so since he said *nafshi*, my very soul is engaged in these jubilations, because You redeemed me so that I did not need to kill. The reason he mentions them all separately then is to underline the various additional acts of deliverance, such as that Absalom's men felt ashamed of having been David's adversary. Not only that, the fact that David had not needed to kill in self defence, he is extremely grateful for. The repentance of his one time adversaries is his greatest cause for satisfaction.

In addition, not only at night time, when the holy spirit wakes him with the lyre and the harp, but the effect of those songs linger all day in view of the fact that his adversaries feel ashamed, repent and need not be punished on David's account. This would have diminished David's merits, as we have explained in connection with Proverbs 17,2.

The very supporters of Absalom became the first to restore David to his rightful place, even before the men of Yehudah, his own tribe. (Samuel II 19,12)

Psalm 72

1. We read in Shemot Rabbah 15,26 on the verse in Exodus 12,1 "this month shall be for you the head of the months", that G'd had given Israel a hint prior to the Exodus that they would not establish a kingdom till after 30 generations. As the month has 30 days, so there would be 30 generations. This is what is hinted at in Psalm 72,7 "the righteous will blossom forth in his day and there will be an abundance of peace when there is no more moon".

The moon appears to grow from New Moon till the 15th of each month, after which it diminished gradually until it disappears at the end of the month.

The historical experience of the people of Israel parallels this. There were 15 generations from Abraham till Solomon, during which period the star of the Jewish people was on the ascent. After Solomon there began a decline.

The eventual zenith of Jewish history will be reached when the Messiah comes, a time ***beli yareach***, when Israel's fortunes will no

עב א לִשְׁלֹמֹה אֱלֹהִים מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ לְמֶלֶךְ תֵּן וְצִדְקָתְךָ לְבֶן-
מֶלֶךְ:
ב יָדִין עַמְּךָ בְצֶדֶק וַעֲנִיֶּיךָ בְמִשְׁפָּט:

longer be subject to decline like the moon. It will no longer be compared to the moon.

David asks G'd for two things concerning Solomon. The first is something which is indispensable for a king if he is to function properly as supreme judge, i.e. ***mishpat***, knowledge of justice.

The second gift I ask You to give him, says David, is because he is my son. Both gifts are essential to promote ***avodatecha***, so that he can serve You properly. He needs to perform ***mishpat***, and he needs to practice ***tzedakah***, charity. He needs to be endowed with wealth.

Solomon needs that ***elokim*** i.e. the attribute of justice concur with the ***mishpat*** he will pronounce in his capacity as king. ***Tzidkatcha le-ben melech***, may my own merit be added to his so that he will have the wealth to practice ***tzedakah***.

2 He should employ both of these endowments in Your service. When I asked to grant him ***mishpetecha***, I meant that he should be able to judge Your people in righteousness, since Your people is not like any other people as our sages have said. (Yalkut Shimoni Kings, item 173)

Solomon was quoted as saying to G'd "who can judge Your numerous nation? If I were to take something belonging to a member of another nation this would not be too serious. But taking something from a Jew, even the most insignificant item, makes one guilty of a capital offence. "This is why David stresses that Solomon should be granted the wisdom to judge "Your people", i.e. that he should be thoroughly familiar with Your ***mishpatecha***, i.e. the Torah.

Concerning David's asking that Solomon should be granted ***tzidkatcha***, Your righteousness, this is a request merely for the king's son not to be inferior to his father. Of David it had been said in Samuel II 8,15, "that he executed justice and righteousness, (charity).

The Talmud Sanhedrin 6 comments that if David had convicted a man to pay a fine, and the person in question did not have the means to pay the fine, David would pay it on his behalf out of his own pocket. This was the ***tzedakah***, righteousness and charity he performed with litigants whose complaints he judged. He does not want his son Solomon to fail to convict a person because of the fact that the sentence could not be carried out anyways. When the Torah says (Exodus 23,3) "you must not grant preference for the poor in his

[3]*Let the mountains produce well-being for the people, the hills, the reward of justice.*
[4]*Let him champion the lowly among the people, deliver the needy folk, and crush those who wrong them.*
[5]*Let them fear You as long as the sun shines, while the moon lasts, generations on end.*

litigation", it means NOT to favour him in judgment, but to pay his fine.

3. Should one believe that Solomon was wealthy, and that Israel itself was experiencing such favorable economic conditions that everyone was wealthy and at peace, and there would not be a poor enough person who could not pay his fine, and there would be no need for litigation, David says that even the mountains themselves brought peace to the people through their abundant harvests etc... Still a king has to be independently wealthy in order not to become dependent on his subjects.

4. Even though the people individually are well off, this does not mean that no one tries to extort money from those on a lower economic strata. A wealthy king can stand up to such extortionists and declare the victim's rights fearlessly, i.e. *vi-yedakeh oshek*, and crush the ones perpetrating the extortion who wrong the poor. This is the reason David had earlier referred to *aniyecha*, Your poor, i.e. those whom You had decided to make poor. The victims of extortion he calls *aniyey am*, those who have been made poor by the people, i.e. the wicked people.

The king also needs wealth so that *beney evyon*, the children of the destitute who had been forced to borrow from the wealthy and are unable to repay their loans will be convicted. Only a wealthy king can help such people pay back the loan on their behalf.

5. Having requested that G'd endow Solomon and the Messiah respectively, the Psalmist now appeals to G'd concerning the people of Israel. He wants them to live to experience the arrival of the Messiah out of merit, i.e. *Im shemesh*, when the sun shines, i.e. when Israel experiences good times.

We know from Sanhedrin 98 that the time at which the Messiah will arrive depends on whether Israel is worthy (i.e. before the time set by G'd) or unworthy. (compare Isaiah 60,22 "I the Lord, at its time I will accelerate it" The verse discusses 2 alternatives.)

If the Messiah does not arrive until its predetermined date, he will be preceded by a *moshiach ben yoseph* who will fall in battle, thereby expiating Israel's sins. (Sukkah 52)

David may be asking that the Moshiach ben Joseph should not

ג יִשְׂאוּ הָרִים שָׁלוֹם לָעָם וּגְבָעוֹת בִּצְדָקָה׃
ד יִשְׁפֹּט עֲנִיֵּי-עָם יוֹשִׁיעַ לִבְנֵי אֶבְיוֹן וִידַכֵּא עוֹשֵׁק׃
ה יִירָאוּךָ עִם-שֶׁמֶשׁ וְלִפְנֵי יָרֵחַ דּוֹר דּוֹרִים׃

have to die. This may be the meaning of Psalms 21,5 "he asked for life from You, – He gave it to you".

If the Messiah arrives due to Israel's merits, – "it will be like beneficial dew for Israel". (Hoseah 14,6) If he comes *be-ittah* because Israel is guilty only at the predetermined time, he will be preceded by the so called birthpangs of the Messiah, and many will die.

Now to the peculiar metaphor in our verse. How can a generation live "before" the moon when the moon is a nightly occurrence?

If the Psalmist has in mind the daily prayers, i.e. the morning prayer being symbolized by *shemesh* sun, and the evening prayer by *yareach* moon, why is there no reference to the *minchah* prayer? Besides, why is the Psalmist using the preposition *im* with the word *shemesh*, sun, whereas he uses the preposition *lifney* with the word *yareach*, moon?

In verse 6 the Psalmist speaks about *yered ke-matar*, "it will descend like rain", but he fails to tell us what the "it" is? What or who is the subject of this verse? What is the meaning of *ad beli yareach* in this verse? Besides, why does the Psalmist refer to only a single *tzaddik* blossoming forth in his days? Why not "righteous people will blossom forth"? Will there be a time when the moon disappears?

The truth is that all these comments of the Psalmist are contrasting the two types of redemption, i.e. the redemption of *achishenah*, I will accelerate its date, and the *be-ittah*, the redemption which occurs only at the final date that G'd had reserved for such an event.

David expresses the fervent hope that "Your people will revere You when the sun shines", i.e. before the temple will be destroyed. In that event, exile can be avoided altogether.

If this condition cannot be met, but Israel will have to experience the destruction of the temple, "woe to us for the day has turned, for the shadows of evening are lengthening" (Jeremiah 6,4), at least let Israel acquire that *yirah*, fear of the Lord BEFORE the moon will return to its place, i.e. before the sun of the Messiah will rise.

The reason the Messiah is referred to as moon is that the kings of the dynasty of David are compared to the moon which increases in size for half a month only to decrease again. Solomon represented the "full moon"; *lifney yareach* after many generations would mean

[6]Let him be like rain that falls on a mown field, like a downpour of rain on the ground,
[7]that the righteous may flourish in his time, and well-being abound, till the moon is no more.
[8]Let him rule from sea to sea, from the river to the ends of the earth.
[9]Let desert-dwellers kneel before him, and his enemies lick the dust.
[10]Let kings of Tarshish and the islands pay tribute, kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts.

"until the next time a king of Davidic descent can be compared to a "full moon". King Zedekiah was the 29th generation from Abraham, and the temple being destroyed during his reign signified that the moon had set and that it had become totally dark.

When the Messiah will come, the light of the moon will be equal to that of the sun, never to diminish again in brightness. This is why David refers to the Messiah as "moon". He prays that Israel should do *teshuvah*, repentance at least before the time when the "moon" has to complete its cycle, i.e. the time Isaiah had called *be-ittah*, its appointed date.

When the Psalmist says *ve-lifney*, the letter *vav* has the meaning of "or" not "and". This is similar to the injunction of the Torah *umekallel aviv Ve immo*, he who curses father OR mother, not necessarily father AND mother. (Exodus 21,17)

To summarize: David prays for the repentance to occur either before the temple is destroyed, i.e. *im shemesh*, or during one of the generations *dor dorim* before the ultimate appointed time for the Messiah, i.e. *lifney yareach*.

6. There are numerous advantages in the event that the Messiah arrives early.

One is that just like rain which falls on a freshly mown field *gez* is beneficial and promotes fast growth, so the early coming of the Messiah when Israel's merits are still "fresh" promotes fast spiritual growth of the people. Another advantage is that if Israel reveres You prior to the appointed time, the rain will not descend in great drops, impacting painfully, but *kirvivim* like pleasant sprays. This is an allusion to the absence of *chevley mashiach* the birthpangs of the Messiah, the painful convulsions Israel would undergo before the advent of the Messiah.

7. Thirdly, the Mashiach ben Yoseph will not have to suffer the

ו יֵרֵד כְּמָטָר עַל-גֵּז כִּרְבִיבִים זַרְזִיף אָרֶץ:
ז יִפְרַח-בְּיָמָיו צַדִּיק וְרֹב שָׁלוֹם עַד-בְּלִי יָרֵחַ:
ח וְיֵרְדְּ מִיָּם עַד-יָם וּמִנָּהָר עַד-אַפְסֵי-אָרֶץ:
ט לְפָנָיו יִכְרְעוּ צִיִּים וְאֹיְבָיו עָפָר יְלַחֵכוּ:
י מַלְכֵי תַרְשִׁישׁ וְאִיִּים מִנְחָה יָשִׁיבוּ מַלְכֵי שְׁבָא וּסְבָא אֶשְׁכָּר יַקְרִיבוּ:

sins of the Jewish people and to fall in battle. The Moshiach ben David will then not have to ask G'd for his life as a replacement of the Moshiach ben Joseph but he will blossom forth immediately and in his own right. The word *beyamav* in his days (i.e. when the *yareach*, moon is still extant) would refer to the Mashiach ben David, whereas the word *tzaddik* would refer to the Mashiach be Yoseph, in that event.

All of this could then occur consecutively, i.e. *beyamav*. The lifetime of the Mashiach ben Yoseph would be blessed with uninterrupted peace. This would last until the advent of the Mashiach ben David, i.e. *ad beli yareach*, while the Mashiach ben David has not yet arrived.

The relevant passage is in Isaiah 26,4 when the prophet speaks about an ongoing condition *shochen ad bitchu bashem adey ad*. The Mashiach ben Yoseph will then not have to be granted life on account of the Mashiach ben David, i.e. *yareach* he can manage *beli yareach*, without the intercession of the Mashiach ben David.

8. If this will be the course of events, i.e. redemption due to Israel's worthiness, the Mashiach ben David would assume his mantle of leadership in stages. At the beginning he would rule from sea to sea, meaning from the red sea to the Mediterranean, i.e. the boundaries of *eretz yisrael*. (Genesis 15,18) This would gradually expand to the river Euphratus, and thence over the remainder of the civilized earth.

9. His rule would expand a little further to include the deserts, and the inhabitants of the arid lands will bow to him. Also, the erstwhile enemies who had fed 80000 priests overly salted food out of hoses meant to contain drinking water, will lick the dust as a fitting punishment. (Jerusalem Talmud Taanit 4,5)

10. Still later, the kings from all the distant places will come bearing gifts (as we explained on Bereshit Rabbah 78,12, these are the gifts Jacob had given Esau. This is why the Psalmist describes these gifts as being "returned" i.e. *yashivu*) It would therefore be a single gift, *minchah*.

[11]*Let all kings bow to him, and all nations serve him.*
[12]*For he saves the needy who cry out, the lowly who have no helper.*
[13]*He cares about the poor and the needy; He brings the needy deliverance.*
[14]*He redeems them from fraud and lawlessness; the shedding of their blood weighs heavily upon him.*

11. A little while later still, all the kings of the earth will personally bow down to the Messiah. They will not content themselves by sending gifts. As a result, all the nations, i.e. the various kings' subjects will serve the Messiah.

12. It seems strange that the Messiah is described as helping only the destitute who turns to him, even if he is aware of who is being subjected to extortion. Also, why does the Psalmist describe the *ani*, poor man as being unable to help himself, whereas no such statement is made concerning the *evyon*, the destitute person? (an even lower level of economic distress) Why are the *ani* and *evyon* mentioned separately, not lumped together? Why are all the praises of the Messiah only matters which any ordinary Israelite is obligated to do anyways? Why are the *nafshot evyonim*, the souls of the destitute mentioned separately in verse 13? Surely that is included in *yatzil evyon*, he will rescue the destitute?

Having heard the Messiah's reaction to oppression of one human being by another, why do we need to be told in verse 14 "their blood is precious in his eyes"?

The ultimate virtue that man should acquire is *anavah*, humility. Of Moses' numerous virtues, the Torah singles out only his humility. (Numbers 12,3) Another virtue the Torah commands us to acquire is in Leviticus 19,18, "love your fellow man as you love yourself". This includes people who are not on one's own level in our usual scale of values.

The Psalmist addresses himself to the first of these two virtues. This love of the *zulat*, the fellow human being, should extend not only to the physical but also to the spiritual, i.e. we should be concerned for our neighbor's soul. The Psalmist who had told us how the Messiah progressively receives the adulation of the whole earth and its dignitaries, tells us that this does not prevent him from turning his attention to PERSONALLY saving the *evyon*, the person on the lowest rung of our social strata. This makes it clear that he will automatically concern himself with people on a slightly higher social and economic scale who may be too shy to ask for help. The

יא וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ-לוֹ כָּל-מְלָכִים כָּל-גּוֹיִם יַעַבְדוּהוּ׃
יב כִּי-יַצִּיל אֶבְיוֹן מְשַׁוֵּעַ וְעָנִי וְאֵין-עֹזֵר לוֹ׃
יג יָחֹס עַל-דַּל וְאֶבְיוֹן וְנַפְשׁוֹת אֶבְיוֹנִים יוֹשִׁיעַ׃
יד מִתּוֹךְ וּמֵחָמָס יִגְאַל נַפְשָׁם וְיֵיקַר דָּמָם בְּעֵינָיו׃

emphasis is on the fact that EVEN the *evyon* who cries out for help is not directed to a social worker or welfare agency but is dealt with personally by the greatest king.

Someone might think that since the aspirations of an *evyon* are so minor, it is easy for the Messiah to extend himself personally, whereas an *ani* who has more demanding needs might not be attended by the Messiah personally. To disabuse us of that kind of thinking, the Psalmist says that the Messiah will treat the *ani veevyon* on the same basis.. Should you assume that ALL this is done on the basis of delegates appointed by the Messiah, the Psalmist says *eyn ozer lo*, he (the Messiah) does not employ helpers. The Psalmist contrasts this behaviour with the fact that all the kings of the earth prostrate themselves before him. This teaches us about the Messiah's humility.

13. Since one could have thought that acceptance of the gift from the king of Tarshish (verse 10) indicated that the Messiah needed these gifts, the Psalmist tells us that the Messiah uses these gifts to support the *dal* or *evyon*, poor or destitute. Since extortion and threat of violence can be caused by need rather than greed, i.e. by an economically desperate extortioner, the Psalmist says that the Messiah will help the *nafshot evyonim* (plural), the state of mind of either the victim or the guilty *evyon*. In this way, both groups of *evyonim* are saved from death.

14. In this way he saves the respective souls from becoming guilty of malice and violence. (the extortionist of violence, the victim from harbouring malice)

The experience of having been looked after by the Messiah will turn the former extortionist into someone who learns to love his fellow man. He no longer needs to use violent means to secure his economic survival. In this way, the Messiah helped him both physically and spiritually. Although it is psychologically proven that a person who gives frequent handouts to someone will gradually stop liking the recipient of his largesse, not so in the case of the Messiah. He will continue to hold the recipient's blood in high esteem, or in ever higher regard. This is another way of saying that the Messiah fulfils the commandment of "love your fellow man like yourself".

15*So let him live, and receive gold of Sheba; let prayers for him be said always, blessings on him invoked at all times.*
16*Let abundant grain be in the land, to the tops of the mountains; let his crops thrive like the forest of Lebanon; and let men sprout up in towns like country grass.*

15. The Psalmist switches and describes the Messiah's relations with people on an individual basis, rather than on a group basis, as before, As we have said previously, the Messiah's loving concern is not only for the victim of violence whom he will save, but also for the perpetrator of the violence, i.e. what had caused him to act in such a fashion. This he does to such an extent that he gives the extortionist of his private funds.

To the argument that once the poor has legally received an amount of 200 zuz, (Peah 8,8) he has not right to appeal for charity, and if it is offered to him as a gift he might feel embarrassed, the Psalmist says that once the poor has crossed the poverty line and his economic survival is assured, the Messiah will give him of the gold of the kingdom of Sheba, not his OWN funds. In this way, the one time *evyon*'s pride will not be hurt if he accepts money without actually depleting someone else's funds. He will explain that they both share the *eshkor*, tribute brought by the kingdom of Sheba. Since highly motivated people hate to accept gifts, and view them as lacking in beneficial qualities, *berachah*, the Messiah prays for the recipients on an ongoing basis, i.e. that the One who is constant *tamid* i.e. G'd, should bless him.

16. The Talmud in Shabbat 30, describes the fertility of the land of Israel in the future as such that it will produce the most superior fine bread, *gluskaot*. The meaning is that it is within G'd's power to let the earth produce wheat kernels which when harvested will not contain waste, not require threshing, winnowing, grinding etc., but are immediately edible like fruit plucked from the trees. Bereshit Rabbah 15 7, tells us that originally, before G'd put a curse on the earth on account of Adam having eaten from the tree of knowledge, *lefet*, a turnip, was ready made bread. It became *lefet* i.e. *lo pat*, no bread, due to the sin.

This would be the justification for the formula of the benediction over bread which says *motzi lechem* etc., i.e. He will eventually make bread come forth.

All these views are based on our verse *yehi pissat bar baaretz*,

טז וִיחִי וִיתֻּן-לוֹ מִזְּהַב שְׁבָא וְיִתְפַּלֵּל בַּעֲדוֹ תָּמִיד כָּל-
הַיּוֹם יְבָרְכֻנְהוּ:
יז יְהִי פִּסַּת-בַּר בָּאָרֶץ בְּרֹאשׁ הָרִים יִרְעַשׁ כַּלְּבָנוֹן
פִּרְיוֹ וְיָצִיצוּ מֵעִיר כְּעֵשֶׂב הָאָרֶץ:

that a piece of bread should come forth from the earth. The entire verse can be understood in this vein. Not only will the fields in the valley produce grain which grows to a point where it can be eaten as ready made bread, but even in the poorer growing areas such as the mountains, where the earth is not well irrigated. Such sights will be so astonishing, unbelievable, that *yirash kalevanon*, the viewers will rustle, make sounds like the cedars in Lebanon when the wind blows. Our sages in Ketuvot 111, understand the words *veyatzitzu meir* as describing the resurrection, the term *ir* without further detail always referring to Jerusalem.

If this is so, we must try and understand how the beginning and the end of our verse are related to each other. In order to do so, we refer to a statement by our sages in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 32, that at the resurrection, the dead will reappear fully clothed.

This is derived from an a fortiori, *kal vachomer*. If wheat, which is put in the ground naked (the seed kernel) reappears covered by several protective layers, husks etc., then a human being who had been interred wearing burial garments will certainly re-emerge fully clothed.

This brings us to our verse. Since the Psalmist says that the wheat of the future will grow (on the tree) without *pessolet*, waste that has to be removed, the question can be asked why G'd does not now make the earth grow bread, but covers it with refuse and necessitates laborious processes till it is turned into bread.

The reason is that G'd wants to teach us this lesson about the manner in which resurrection will take place. In other words, conditions that exist now are symbolic of something in the future that is otherwise difficult to believe. The very difficulty in producing bread is a lesson in faith, teaches that the seemingly impossible is not so unbelievable. We must have faith that our bodies can emerge in even greater splendour than before, at the resurrection.

17. Our sages in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 32, said that the reason the Messiah is called *Yinon* is because the Messiah's merits will hasten the resurrection once the era of the Messiah has arrived. As a result, the resurrected can be viewed as the Messiah's progeny in

17 *May his name be eternal; while the sun lasts, may his name endure; let men invoke his blessedness upon themselves; let all nations count him happy.*
18 *Blessed is the LORD God, God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things,*
19 *Blessed is His glorious name forever; His glory fills the whole world. Amen and Amen.*
20 *End of the prayers of David son of Jesse.*

BOOK THREE

73 *A psalm of Asaph.*
God is truly good to Israel, to those whose heart is pure.

an expanded sense. (If *nin* is greatgrandson, *yinon*, he will become the greatgrandfather because of his name)

Compare Psalms 78,65, "awakened like a warrior who jubilantly shakes off his wine". How does all this relate to the foregoing? Why has the Messiah's NAME suddenly become important? In what way does the name have a bearing on future events?

We have explained in the previous verse that until the time of the Messiah there will be no visible reminders of the resurrection, since wheat emerging covered with all kinds of refuse, i.e. is comparable to someone emerging fully clothed. Once the Messiah has arrived, and instead of the laborious process of gaining bread from wheat, we will reap it ready made, what will then remind us of the coming resurrection? (which is not simultaneous with the arrival of the Messiah but occurs a minimum of 40 years later? compare Sanhedrin 99 and Midrash Tehillim 90,17)

We are told in Pessachim 54, that one of the 7 things that preceded the universe, i.e. *lifney shemesh* was the name of the redeemer Yinon. The reason he was so named was to remind people that he would awaken the dead. The presence of the Messiah plus the fact that his very name symbolizes resurrection, will take the place of the wheat which had formerly fulfilled that function.

To the argument that SEEING, i.e. observing a transformation taking place in the kernel of wheat is far more powerful a symbol than merely HEARING a name, the Psalmist says not to worry, it will be so clear to everyone that the blessings experienced during the reign of the Messiah are linked to his name, that when people bless their children they will say "may the Lord make you like Yinon".

Even all the gentiles will praise him. Anyhow, because of his great

יז יְהִי שְׁמוֹ לְעוֹלָם לִפְנֵי-שֶׁמֶשׁ יִנּוֹן שְׁמוֹ וְיִתְבָּרְכוּ בוֹ
כָּל-גּוֹיִם יְאַשְּׁרֻהוּ׃
יח בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֹשֵׂה נִפְלָאוֹת
לְבַדּוֹ׃
יט וּבָרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹדוֹ לְעוֹלָם וְיִמָּלֵא כְבוֹדוֹ אֶת-כָּל-
הָאָרֶץ אָמֵן וְאָמֵן׃
כ כָּלוּ תְפִלּוֹת דָּוִד בֶּן-יִשָׁי׃

ספר שלישי

עג

א מִזְמוֹר לְאָסָף אַךְ טוֹב לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהִים לְבָרֵי לֵבָב׃

achievements they will be very much aware of the symbolism contained in his name.

18. Since the gentiles think that what the Messiah has achieved, he has done in his own right, the Psalmist stresses that it is G'd who is the prime mover, both when He acts in His capacity of the attribute of mercy i.e. *hashem*, and when He acts in His capacity of the attribute of justice, i.e. *elokim*. Before the destruction of the temple, He had generally been known as *elokey yisrael*, the G'd of Israel. Whatever the situation, *niflaot*, miracles are not performed by anyone in his own right, only as messengers or tools of G'd. This is the meaning of *osseh niflaot levado*, He alone performs miracles.

19. The same holds true when due to exile, he is not known as *elokey yisrael*, but only *shem kevodo*. He is blessed forever, since even when Israel is in exile, He performs miracles such as for Chananyah Mishael and Azaryah, (Daniel chapter 3) or Mordechai and Esther. (Megillat Esther) The same holds true for the third period, i.e. the period of the Messiah, when the whole earth will be filled with His glory as well as for the era of resurrection. The word *amen* twice, hints at these two periods.

20. After the coming of the Messiah and the resurrection, when the moon will again be equal to the sun, i.e. *veyimale kevodo*, His glory will be filling the earth. David will no longer need to offer *tefillah*, i.e. those prayers in which requests are voiced. He will only voice *tehillot*, praises when communicating with G'd. All his *tefillot* had as their objective only to help rehabilitate the sin Adam had committed in *gan eden*.

[2]As for me, my feet had almost strayed, my steps were nearly led off course,
[3]for I envied the wanton; I saw the wicked at ease.
[4]Death has no pangs for them; their body is healthy.

Psalm 73

1. The problem of the success of the wicked on this earth, and the suffering of the righteous, has exercised the minds of many, including Moses, as we know from Berachot 7. However, when wondering about G'd's ways, not everyone emphasizes the same aspect of this problem.

Some are only concerned with the suffering of the righteous, others with the success of the wicked, yet others cannot comprehend either of these two phenomena.

Asaph in this Psalm belongs to the group of people who have made peace with the fact that many righteous undergo suffering in this life. He is only upset at the success of the more obviously wicked people. He consoles himself that the suffering of the righteous is a way of atoning for the guilty of their generation, something which saves the sinners from the immediate retribution of G'd for their sins. In other words, the righteous who suffer, serve as scapegoats. This idea is found in Isaiah 52, 13–14 "My servant WILL prosper... just as many were appalled at his distorted appearance etc." See also, perhaps more importantly, Isaiah 53,11, "My righteous servant was suffering for their sins". The Talmud in Shabbat 33 states also that when there are *tzaddikim* in a generation, it is they who absorb the punishment that their generation deserves.

Bereshit Rabbah 96, tells that Rabbi Chiyah broke out in tears when his uncle Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi who had suffered from a toothache for 13 years recovered from his pains. While he had been suffering, we are told, all the country's mothers had been giving birth painlessly, no woman had suffered a miscarriage etc. All of this shows how the *tzaddik* can be the scapegoat for his generation. Rabbi Chiyah wept because Rabbi's recovery meant that all the women giving birth from then on would again have to suffer pains, and because some expectant mothers would again have to lose unborn children.

The other part of the *tzaddik vera lo*, the righteous and his suffering, problem, the success of the wicked however, was what exercised Asaph's mind. It was something he had not been able to come to terms with.

Those who argue that Asaph should have composed an elegy,

ג וַאֲנִי כִּמְעַט נָטוּ רַגְלָי כְּאַיִן שְׁפָכָה אֲשֻׁרָי
ד כִּי קִנֵּאתִי בַּהוֹלְלִים שְׁלוֹם רִשְׁעִים אֶרְאֶה:
ה כִּי אֵין חַרְצֻבּוֹת לְמוֹתָם וּבָרִיא אוּלָם:

bemoaning the fate of the righteous are wrong. He praises the Lord, since the minimal comforts that the *tzaddikim* enjoy in this world are due to G'd punishing them for any minor misdemeanors already in this life, so that their share in the life to come will not be impaired. This is the meaning of *elokim*, i.e. the attribute of justice which goes to work on those who *barey levav* are of pure heart. At the same time, those afflictions suffered by the *tzaddikim* protect their generation, i.e. *tov leyisrael*.

2. Asaph, who admits that the phenomenon of the suffering of the wicked and the simultaneous success of the sinner nearly undermined his faith in G'd's justice, is only too concerned at the impact such phenomena has on the multitude, on people whose faith is weaker than his. Had he lost his faith in G'd's justice, all the merits he had acquired in a pious life prior to that would have gone down the drain, i.e. *keayin shafchu*, as if they had never existed.

3. "For I envied those who indulged in debauchery, were wicked and yet I observed them being at peace". What Asaph means is that though intellectually he remained aware of the fact that everything G'd does is done intelligently, he had had difficulty in accepting all these phenomena emotionally.

4. In the event that someone were to tell Asaph that he should not worry, that G'd feeds the wicked the reward they have earned for any merits acquired already in this life, (Bereshit Rabbah 33,1) in accordance with the verse in Deuteronomy 7,10 "He pays His enemies (their reward) to their face", i.e. without delay, Asaph replies that he is fully aware of this, but it does not put his mind at rest.

We have a tradition that judgment begins with a person's death (Avot 3,1). We also have a tradition that just as a *tzaddik* departs this life happy because his mental eye has been shown his place in the hereafter, so the wicked person's mental eye is shown what is in store for him. What upsets Asaph is that he sees no evidence of the wicked dying in terror of the judgment in store for him as soon as he has died.

On the contrary, visual evidence shows *eyn chartzuvot*, he seems totally unfettered, unconcerned, even at the point of death. (see Bereshit Rabbah 62,2 for part of this tradition)

If the successful wicked were to experience painful death throes,

[5]*They have no part in the travail of men; they are not afflicted like the rest of mankind.*
[6]*So pride adorns their necks, lawlessness enwraps them as a mantle.*
[7]*Fat shuts out their eyes; their fancies are extravagant.*
[8]*They scoff and plan evil; from their eminence they plan wrongdoing.*

at least it would alert those who observe his death to the fact that punishment is in store for the *rasha*, wicked person after he departs this life. Had these wicked people at least experienced a noticeable weakening of their physical strength prior to their death, or a prolonged illness, the Psalmist would not even have raised the issue. But, seeing the wicked often dies in full bloom, without pain or suffering death pangs, Asaph finds very disconcerting.

5. G'd's answer to Moses' question regarding why some *tzaddikim* are well off whereas others suffer, as quoted in Berachot 7, is that the *tzaddik* who is well off is the son of a *tzaddik*, whereas the *tzaddik* who suffers is a first generation *tzaddik* who has no parental merits to draw on.

We observe in our daily lives that this answer given by G'd does not seem to match the reality as we observe it! Therefore, we interpret this statement of the Talmud as referring to *gilgul*, i.e. reincarnation of the same soul in another body. If the soul of the person we perceive to be a *tzaddik* now, has also been a *tzaddik* in the body of a person during a previous life, so that he can draw on the merit of THAT *tzaddik*, he may experience a pleasant existence this time. This is so because he neither has to atone for his own sins nor for those of the person whose soul his body now inhabits.

However, if the present *tzaddik* had been a *rasha*, wicked person in his previous incarnation, the sins of the previous incarnation are being blotted out by the sufferings the *tzaddik* experiences in this present incarnation. In other words, the soul of that incarnation now experiences the suffering it had not experienced in a previous life, but had deserved to experience.

Conversely, the phenomenon of *rasha vetov lo*, the success experienced by people whom we perceive as being wicked, is due to the reincarnation of the soul of someone who had been a *tzaddik* in an earlier life. The present day *rasha* draws on the unexpired merit of the *tzaddik* of his earlier incarnation. Lastly, the *rasha* who suffers in this life, is the one who had also been a *rasha* in an earlier

ה בַּעֲמַל אֱנוֹשׁ אֵינֵימוֹ וְעִם-אָדָם לֹא יְנֻגָּעוּ׃
ו לָכֵן עֲנָקַתְמוֹ גַּאֲוָה יַעֲטָף-שִׁית חָמָס לָמוֹ׃
ז יָצָא מֵחֵלֶב עֵינֵמוֹ עָבְרוּ מַשְׂכִּיּוֹת לֵבָב׃
ח יָמִיקוּ וִידַבְּרוּ בְרָע עֹשֶׁק מִמָּרוֹם יְדַבֵּרוּ׃

incarnation, and therefore has no unexpired merits to draw on either from that life or in his present life.

The Talmud there in Berachot 7 concludes, that G'd's answer to Moses made a distinction between a *tzaddik gamur*, a totally righteous person and an "ordinary" *tzaddik*, i.e. a person who on balance has more merits than demerits. Similarly, a *rasha gamur* is a totally wicked person, someone without redeeming qualities, whereas the "normal" wicked person is someone who has redeeming qualities but not enough to balance his demerits, sins.

In the former case, a pleasant life is experienced, whereas when there are demerits G'd makes the *tzaddik* pay for his demerits in this life to preserve his entire portion in the hereafter intact. The reverse applies to the respective categories of the *rasha*, wicked person.

6. Therefore, when such wicked people notice that even the *adam*, i.e. the *tzaddikim* are being subjected to collective troubles, whereas they, the wicked seem immune, they will feel superior saying that "we do not compare to other people, but we are far superior". They wear this pride around their neck like an ornament, in fact the ornament i.e. pride totally enwraps them *yaatof*, so that they consider their violent ways *chamass* as too low, insignificant to bother to disguise. *Shiit* means ornament.

7. He proceeds to indulge in sexual immorality. The word *chelev* often symbolizes excess physical indulgence. Some indulgences stem from the body, others from the eye. The latter is called *chelev eynemo*. The process is that the eye sees, the heart desires, and the body translates this desire into gratification. The Psalmist says that they eye's desire exceeds the body's ability to consummate, and the heart's extravagant fantasies.

8. After having indulged in sexual deviations, they indulge in *lashon hara*, the evil tongue, not only slandering people but even slandering G'd Himself, i.e. *mimarom yedaberu*, they speak (evil) of the heavens. The way they assure themselves of a hearing is by speaking out against *oshek*, exploitation such as employers withholding labourers' wages, i.e. *bera oshek*.

By means of this stratagem they establish credibility. *yamiku*, they appear to denigrate, dissolve themselves by harping on the

9*They set their mouths against heaven, and their*
tongues range over the earth.
10*So they pound His people again and again, until they*
are drained of their very last tear.
11*Then they say, "How could God know? Is there*
knowledge with the Most High?"
12*Such are the wicked; ever tranquil, they amass wealth.*
13*It was for nothing that I kept my heart pure and*
washed my hands in innocence,
14*seeing that I have been constantly afflicted, that each*
morning brings new punishments.

immorality of withholding compensation from those who have laboured. By this means, their listeners are prepared to agree to what these wicked people have to say on other subjects.

They follow this up by accusing G'd of denying the righteous their due reward, seeing that the righteous frequently suffer afflictions, even die of hunger. They contrast this with the extortionist who prospers by robbing others.

9. After initially only hinting at G'd's injustice, they become emboldened and set their tongues against G'd outright, speak evilly against G'd. The Psalmist wishes that such comments had not been heard by the people but by heaven, i.e. *shatu bashamayim piyhem*, at least then they would not be guilty of raising doubts about G'd's justice among the people. Unfortunately, *uleshonam tehalach baaretz* their loose talk walks about on earth, creating the impression that G'd deals unfairly with the *tzaddikim*.

10. The Psalmist says that his whole complaint had been the success of the wicked. He reinforces this by saying that the wicked themselves view G'd as discriminating against the righteous. An example is Yossi ben Yoezer, whose relative converted to paganism and who rode high on a horse dressed in a splendid uniform, while his uncle was being led to die on the scaffold, carrying a heavy beam on the way to his own execution. The convert boastfully compared himself riding high, and his pious uncle who played the role of the beast of burden. (Bereshit Rabbah 65,22) His taunts produced the reply from Yossi ben Yoezer that if G'd treats His pious in such fashion, exacting punishment for minor offences, what must be in store for the likes of the converts etc. Rabbi Yossi's nephew took these words to heart and committed suicide in a manner that combined the 4 legal means of execution in Jewish law.

ט שַׁתּוּ בַשָּׁמַיִם פִּיהֶם וּלְשׁוֹנָם תִּהֲלַךְ בָּאָרֶץ׃
י לָכֵן יָשׁוּב עַמּוֹ הֲלֹם וּמֵי מָלֵא יִמָּצוּ לָמוֹ׃
יא וְאָמְרוּ אֵיכָה יָדַע-אֵל וְיֵשׁ דֵּעָה בְּעֶלְיוֹן׃
יב הִנֵּה-אֵלֶּה רְשָׁעִים וְשַׁלְוֵי עוֹלָם הִשְׂגּוּ-חָיִל׃
יג אַךְ-רִיק זִכִּיתִי לִבָּבִי וָאֶרְחַץ בְּנִקָּיוֹן כַּפָּי׃
יד וָאֱהִי נָגוּעַ כָּל-הַיּוֹם וְתוֹכַחְתִּי לַבְּקָרִים׃

When he became aware of this, Rabbi Yossi exclaimed that his nephew had preceded him on his way to *gan eden*, the hereafter by a brief hour. The Psalmist is aware that such a reaction by the wicked to admonition is most rare, and that Yakim Ish Tzerorot (the aforementioned sinner/convert) was an exception, and that people do not react as he had done. On the contrary, *mey male yimatzu lamo*, not only do the listeners accept the REASONING of the wicked, but they want to taste (squeeze out) all the "full waters", i.e. the gratifications that life on earth has to offer.

11. The people query "how is it possible that the G'd who is totally spiritual, (abstract) should be aware of the deeds of physical human beings, especially, since He is not down here, but *beelyon*, high above?

12. It is clear that the success of the wicked must be due to their *mazzal*, i.e. that they have been born under a lucky star, and not to an endowment by G'd.

13. Asaph says that he PERSONALLY, could come to terms with the success of the wicked, but his concern is the reaction of the multitude to such phenomena. Their reaction to G'd's apparent injustice leads them to conclude *eycha yada el*?, how could G'd have known and allowed all this? Such a popular misconception would be a terrible spiritual disease for the people!

14. Since I suffered from afflictions all day long, (and was weakened) I did my admonishings in the mornings (when I felt a little stronger). However, it did not help.

15. I cannot spell out that they deny Your Providence, even if I told it approximately, i.e. *kemo*, I would become guilty of treason against Your children, the Jewish people. After all, what happened to Moses who had presumed to tell You G'd that based on his experience with the Jewish people they would not believe that G'd had appeared to him and appointed him saviour! (compare Exodus 4,1, when G'd punished Moses immediately, making his hand leprous. Shabbat 96)

15*Had I decided to say these things, I should have been*
false to the circle of Your disciples.
16*So I applied myself to understand this, but it seemed a*
hopeless task
17*till I entered God's sanctuary and reflected on their*
fate.
18*You surround them with flattery; You make them fall*
through blandishments.
19*How suddenly are they ruined, wholly swept away by*
terrors.
20*When You are aroused You despise their image, as one*
does a dream after waking, O LORD.
21*My mind was stripped of its reason, my feelings were*
numbed.

16. We have mentioned that two problems bothered Asaph. 1) The serenity and bliss in which the wicked exist. 2) The blasphemy against G'd which the wicked engage in as a result of their success. Asaph says that he thought hard about why G'd had allowed the wicked to prosper, and he could find reasons for this; but *amal hoo beeynay*, it bothers me because of the APPEARANCE of G'd's injustice it creates among all those who view things only from the vantage point of their eyes, i.e. they base all their judgments on what the eye can see. The expression *beeynay*, like *mareh eynay bassar li*, what my eyes behold has substance.

17. Even this bother will not last forever, only till I will have the *zechut*, merit to be one of the Levites who sing in the temple. Asaph was one of the Levites, as we know from Chronicles I 16,37.

At that time, he expects additional *ruach hakodesh*, spiritual insights which will reveal to him the fate in store for those wicked people in another incarnation, i.e. *avinah la-achariritam*. The location of the temple on earth opposite the sanctuary in the celestial regions confers additional insights on those who regularly serve G'd in the temple. This is why the Psalmist speaks of *mikdeshey*, sanctuaries (pl) of G'd. (see our commentary on Psalms 132,7).

18. However, my second concern, the blasphemy against the heavenly Providence, or rather the lack of it, and the effect this has amongst the people who are led into sinning by these scoffers, the well to do sinners, bothers me far more. You G'd should not let them carry on by restraining Yourself. This is *ach bachalokot*, for their smooth talk, *tashit lamo*, You have to pay them back, You have to

כב אִם-אָמַרְתִּי אֲסַפְּרָה כְּמוֹ הִנֵּה דוֹר בָּנֶיךָ בָּגָדְתִּי:
כג וַאֲחַשְׁבָה לָדַעַת זֹאת עָמָל הִיא בְעֵינָי:
כד עַד-אָבוֹא אֶל-מִקְדְּשֵׁי-אֵל אָבִינָה לְאַחֲרִיתָם:
כה אַךְ בַּחֲלָקוֹת תָּשִׁית לָמוֹ הִפַּלְתָּם לְמַשּׁוּאוֹת:
כו אֵיךְ הָיוּ לְשַׁמָּה כְּרָגַע סָפּוּ תַמּוּ מִן-בַּלָּהוֹת:
כז כַּחֲלוֹם מֵהָקִיץ אֲדֹנָי בָּעִיר צַלְמָם תִּבְזֶה:
כח כִּי יִתְחַמֵּץ לְבָבִי וְכִלְיוֹתַי אֶשְׁתּוֹנָן:

arrange retribution. The word ***tashit*** is used in a sense similar to Exodus 21,2 ***tasim lifneyhem = tesader lahem***, You carefully arrange it for them. (See Mechilta on that verse)

They must not die suddenly, but a little at a time, through afflictions, to make it clear to the multitude that these people are being punished by Heaven. ***mashuot*** if their collapse would be instant, i.e. their decline will register like a signal light.

19. If they died suddenly, people would have commented briefly about how these sinners had suddenly been destroyed, and would have ascribed it to the end of a predetermined life span which is wiped out by a catastrophe.

20. But Asaph asks that ***kachalom mehakitz*** that they should become like sleep walkers, as if constantly slumbering, ***tardemah***, not fully conscious, bereft of their faculties. The way these sinners move around should signal to all who observe them that they are being punished. The onlookers will praise the Lord for paying back the sinners in an appropriate manner.

Those whose arrogance led them to believe that they were smarter than anyone else, will now be observed as not in control of their faculties at all. You despise their image in the city, i.e. they will be discredited amongst the multitude.

Those who had insisted that there was no G'd on earth, will now be an example that there is a G'd even in the city. The earth will be filled with G'd's glory by the way the sinners' image is being debased.

21. Beginning with the three verses commencing here, Asaph thanks G'd that despite his own deep misgivings G'd had helped him keep his faith in G'd's ***hashgachah***, personal Providence, intact.

When speaking about ***levavi***, he refers to both his hearts, i.e. both the good urge and the evil urge. When "I saw how both became soured at the apparent injustice and its evil consequences, and when

22*I was a dolt, without knowledge; I was brutish toward You.*
23*Yet I was always with You, You held my right hand;*
24*You guided me by Your counsel and led me toward honor.*
25*Whom else have I in heaven?*
And having You, I want no one on earth.
26*My body and mind fail; but God is the stay of my mind, my portion forever.*
27*Those who keep far from You perish; You annihilate all who are untrue to You.*

the seat of my reasoning, i.e. *kilyotai* my kidneys was assailed by these facts like by sharp arrows, – (*Eshtonen* from *shinun*)

22. I was underequipped to counter these misgivings, since I am by nature a *ba-ar*, an ignorant dolt, and know nothing". The Psalmist talks about twc deficiencies here. *Ba-ar* is the inability to absorb knowledge, *lo eyda* is the failure to absorb the knowledge one is capable of absorbing, i.e. failure to study. As a result, I was like two *behemot*, beasts in regard to You.

23. Nonetheless, I remained constant with You, remained steadfast in my faith. My steps did not stumble as did my heart. My theoretical doubts did not result in my changing my way of life. This was due to Your support of me, You took hold of my right hand and supported me.

24. The tone sign on the word *ve-achar* is a clear indication that it is separate from the word *kavod*, as explained by David Kimchi. We have explained on Isaiah 58,8 "Your righteousness will walk ahead of you and the glory of the Lord will gather you in", that the prophet means that after the righteousness of the Lord walks in front of man, His righteousness, i.e. His *Shechinah* will gather you in.

The Psalmist here says "I am afraid of my evil urge that it should not seduce me, therefore I plead that Your counsel, Your Torah teachings should guide me. He refers to such verses as Deut. 30,15 "see I have placed before You life and death, you shall choose life (Deut. 30,19)". Asaph says "I do not merely want Your assurance that I will follow Your advice, but I want Your ACTIVE guidance. I do not ask for this for an extended period of time. As soon as You have guided me to follow Your counsel, and I have perfected myself, You who are called "glory" can take me from this world".

The word *achar* usually means immediately after, similar to the

כג וַאֲנִי-בַעַר וְלֹא אֵדָע בְּהֵמוֹת הָיִיתִי עִמָּךְ׃
כד וַאֲנִי תָמִיד עִמָּךְ אָחַזְתָּ בְּיַד יְמִינִי׃
כה בַּעֲצָתְךָ תַנְחֵנִי וְאַחַר כָּבוֹד תִּקָּחֵנִי׃
כו מִי-לִי בַשָּׁמָיִם וְעִמְּךָ לֹא-חָפַצְתִּי בָאָרֶץ׃
כז כָּלָה שְׁאֵרִי וּלְבָבִי צוּר-לְבָבִי וְחֶלְקִי אֱלֹהִים לְעוֹלָם׃
כח כִּי-הִנֵּה רְחֵקֶיךָ יֹאבֵדוּ הִצְמַתָּה כָּל-זוֹנֶה מִמֶּךָּ׃

liturgist who composed the line *retzoncha eshalah rega va-egvah*. As soon as I have succeeded in carrying out Your will, the *Shechinah*, i.e. *kavod* may take me from this life.

25. You G'd could ask why I asked for my soul to be taken, instead of asking to ascend heavenwards as did Moses, i.e. body and soul together? Or, why did I not ask for my soul to remain with me on earth so that we could accumulate more merits in Your service?

The reason is that who else is in heaven, i.e. body and soul so that I could ask to join them? This is the *mi li bashamayim*?

On the other hand, if You offer to be with me so that my body and soul could remain together, – I do not want to be with You on earth,

26. since ultimately on earth, this murky planet, there is no point to life except inasmuch as we serve You in thought or/and deed.

If I stay on earth permanently, I will not be able to do either, once my physical strength declines and comes to an end.

To ask G'd to grant me unlimited physical endurance is not possible, since it is the nature of man's raw material to disintegrate eventually. I cannot as my *she-er* and *levav* become *tzur* rock like, impervious to the ravages of time. He who is the *tzur* of my heart, i.e. my G'd and the *chelki* of my soul, i.e. G'd, *elokim le-olam*, He alone endures eternally, since He is the One who lent the universe the ability to endure. Ever since Adam's sin, man has lost the ability to endure, but his body must return to earth and his spirit to G'd who had given it to him. (Eccles. 12,7).

27. Asaph says that after contemplating all this, I know that all those evil people who seem well off, will perish in the end, this is why I do not mind their brief spell of good fortune. Proof is that all those who engage in sexual licentiousness, You have annihilated shortly thereafter. (see Numbers 25,3–9) This is ONE sin that G'd does not let go unpunished for long. Seeing that G'd reacts quickly in case of *zenut*, sexual licentiousness and promiscuity, it is clear that He also reacts to other sins, even if only after an interval. The stress on the

28*As for me, nearness to God is good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may recount all Your works.*

74 *A* maskil *of Asaph.*
Why, O God, do You forever reject us, do You fume in anger at the flock that You tend?
2*Remember the community You made Yours long ago, Your very own tribe that You redeemed, Mount Zion, where You dwell.*

word *mimecka* is to teach that the penalty of *karet* means being cut off from one's root, i.e. from one's heavenly origin.

28. I also am not concerned about the suffering of the pious, since I know personally that the proximity of the attribute of justice, i.e. *elokim* is good for me, because it is what ensures the Lord my G'd being my refuge instead of transient pleasures of the world. By undergoing *yissurim*, afflictions, my body becomes refined also, and I am enabled to relate all Your great deeds since I am the recipient of a measure of Your holy spirit. I could not have become the instrument that tells Israel of Your great works had I indulged myself in the pleasures of the world.

Possibly, the word *malachotecha* is equivalent to a *malach*, i.e. becoming Your messenger, Your prophet. Through the refinement process of my body, I was enabled to become Your prophet and to deliver messages to Israel pertaining to the needs of my particular generation.

Psalm 74

1. Since Asaph had been endowed with holy spirit, he had an idea of what would happen hundreds of years later when the temple would be destroyed, and Israel would march into captivity.

He knew that the conqueror would be cruel and harsh. Ever since he knew this, he pleaded with G'd about the troubles we would face, pleaded for our spiritual redemption and about the destruction of the temple. He asked G'd how long He could forsake us in this manner and how long he could continue to let His anger at His people smoulder.

Before going into detail, it is well to recall a story in Eycha Rabbati that G'd had sworn not to redeem Israel until the final date set for the redemption, if it had not been for the cries of Rachel (Jeremiah 31,14).

כח וַאֲנִי קִרְבַת אֱלֹהִים לִי-טוֹב שַׁתִּי בַאדֹנָי יֱהוִה מַחֲסִי
לְסַפֵּר כָּל-מַלְאֲכוֹתֶיךָ:

עד א מַשְׂכִּיל לְאָסָף לָמָּה אֱלֹהִים זָנַחְתָּ לָנֶצַח יֶעְשַׁן אַפְּךָ
בְּצֹאן מַרְעִיתֶךָ:
ב זְכֹר עֲדָתְךָ קָנִיתָ קֶדֶם גָּאַלְתָּ שֵׁבֶט נַחֲלָתֶךָ הַר-צִיּוֹן
זֶה שָׁכַנְתָּ בּוֹ:

At that time, G'd had told her to stop crying (Jeremiah 31,15) since her cries had been heard and the captives would return from the land of their captors. We have explained in our commentary on Lamentations 5,20, that the "forgetting" that is referred to in that verse means that G'd had meant to "forget" about Israel until the time of the *keytz*, i.e. the final redemption.

It is this that the prophet Jeremiah lamented in *eychah*. We also know from our sages, (Eycha Rabbah 4,14) that G'd poured out the worst of His wrath on wood and stone (i.e. the temple), so that He would not have to destroy His people, – only His temple.

The scriptural proof of this is derived from Lamentations 4,11. Similarly, Psalm 79 has inspired Asaph to sing a *mizmor* instead of an elegy. (compare Kiddushin 31)

Now to our Psalm. We have experienced 4 exiles. Babylonia, as a result of the destruction of the first temple. Persia/Media under the wicked Haman; Greece, and Edom/Rome as a result of the destruction of the second temple.

Asaph matches his words to the various exiles of the Jewish people, (all of which were far beyond his time).

He begins with the first exile, asking why G'd should abandon us indefinitely, referring to G'd's oath mentioned earlier. He says that if G'd's anger will smoulder forever, (till the final redemption) what sense had there been in pouring out His wrath on wood and stone? There is real danger that Your anger will consume Your people totally, i.e. *tzon mar-itecha*!

2. Concerning the second exile, when Haman tried to kill us all, Asaph says "remember Your congregation Israel", i.e. if there is no Israel then the whole world will not endure? We have explained that there are 7 components of this universe all of which are prerequisites for the universe's continued existence. Israel is one of those

[3]Bestir Yourself because of the perpetual tumult, all the outrages of the enemy in the sanctuary.
[4]Your foes roar inside Your meeting-place; they take their signs for true signs.
[5]It is like men wielding axes against a gnarled tree;

components. (Chagigah 12) The Psalmist reminds G'd that Israel (the concept) preceded the universe, ***kanita kedem***, You acquired BEFORE time, i.e. Israel is one of the seven items preceding the universe, such as Torah, G'd's throne, the name of Messiah etc.

If You G'd decreed their destruction because they bowed to the image of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3) You redeemed them afterwards having regard for the martyrdom displayed by Chananyah Mishael and Azaryah. This is ***ge-ulat shevet nachalatecha***, the men of the tribe of Yehudah (Chananyah etc.) being ***nachalatecha***, Your inheritance.

We know that Yehudah qualifies for that description from Zachariah 2,16, "G'd will take Yehudah as the portion of His inheritance". Hence, the tribe of Yehudah You have redeemed because of the 3 outstanding men belonging to that tribe. This verse would become inapplicable if all the Jews including the tribe of Yehudah were to be killed now by Haman's decree.

Furthermore, if that were to happen, why did You never completely remove the ***Shechinah*** from Zion, but ***shachanta bo***, You kept a residence there in the Western wall?

After all, G'd's Presence on earth serves only the one purpose now, namely to hold out hope of a rosier future, and that G'd wants to bring Israel back to its land.

3. About the Greek exile Asaph says "lift Your steps to the site of eternal darkness", i.e. before the Greeks' objective of destroying everything holy will result in total spiritual darkness. We know from Bereshit Rabbah that the Greeks made the Jews inscribe on the horns of their oxen that they had no share in the G'd of Israel. (Chagiga Yerushalmi, 2,2) They put idols in the sanctuary, forbade circumcision, Sabbath observance etc. Asaph requests speedy intervention by G'd because the danger to the soul of the Jewish people under the Greek exile exceeds the danger to the body of the Jewish people in other exiles.

4. Concerning the exile under the Romans, the present exile, the one that has been continuous since the destruction of the second temple, Asaph says ***sha-a-gu tzore-recha***. The Talmud Gittin 56 understands this verse as referring to Titus (conqueror of the second temple) who entered the holy of holies with a whore and a Torah

ג הָרִימָה פְעָמֶיךָ לְמַשֹּׁאוֹת נֶצַח כָּל הֵרַע אוֹיֵב בַּקֹּדֶשׁ:
ד שָׁאֲגוּ צוֹרְרֶיךָ בְּקֶרֶב מוֹעֲדֶךָ שָׂמוּ אוֹתֹתָם אֹתוֹת:
ה יִוָּדַע כְּמֵבִיא לְמָעְלָה בְּסִבְכֵי-עֵץ קַרְדֻּמוֹת:

scroll and who proceeded to fornicate there on the holy scroll and pierced the dividing curtain with his sword. When blood emerged from the dividing curtain, he fancied that he had succeeded in killing the Jewish G'd. The wicked people who destroyed the second temple certainly denied Your existence and power, as we know from Berachot 3 that every day the *Shechinah* complains about the destruction of the temple, since we read in Jeremiah 25,30 "He keeps shouting concerning His residence". Because they know this, the wicked want to perpetuate some great symbol to commemorate their might. They did this by shouting *bekerev mo-adecha*, inside Your sanctuary. This was sort of a challenge to G'd to respond in kind and to terrify them, if indeed He still had any power. If G'd failed to do so, they would construe this as proof that G'd was old, had weakened, as Haman had said at the time of Ahasverus. (Esther Rabbah 7,13)

This is what Asaph means when he says *samu ototam otot*, they take their OWN signs as true signs. It is noteworthy that the word *ototam* has a letter *vav* missing between the two letter *tav*, whereas the word *otot* has the letter *vav* missing after the *aleph*. (i.e. has a *vav* between the two letters *tav*) This may indicate that when they noticed G'd maintaining silence, i.e. the *vav* being missing, they considered that as proof that their own *ot* was in the ascendancy. Therefore, the *vav* from G'd's *ot* is omitted when describing their own *ot*.

The fact is, however, that these people have no idea of the true greatness of G'd, which consists of His ability to shrug off such insults without reacting to them automatically.

They treat G'd as if the word *ototam* was spelled with two *vavim*, i.e. as if it meant that G'd had not only withdrawn His *hashgachah*, benevolent Personal supervision on earth from Israel, but had also become too weak to exercise it if He wanted to.

5. The expression *meyvi* is not appropriate when one discusses the lifting of the axe, i.e. *lema-alah ba-etz kardumot*. It is appropriate only when one lowers the axe to the tree. Lifting the axe is only a preparation for lowering it. Besides, what is the meaning of the *sevach*, the thicket in this connection?

The fact is that the word *hova-ah*, i.e. the downward swing is the important movement enabling the holder of the axe to split the wood.

[6]with hatchet and pike they hacked away at its carved work.
[7]They made Your sanctuary go up in flames; they brought low in dishonor the dwelling-place of Your presence.
[8]They resolved, "Let us destroy them altogether!" They burned all God's tabernacles in the land.
[9]No signs appear for us; there is no longer any prophet; no one among us knows for how long.

In the case of those who destroyed the temple, their main purpose had been the preparatory upward motion with the axe. This symbolized their attack on G'd Himself, rather than the destruction of the temple structures. The sight of the handle of the axe confuses the onlooker, i.e. *bisvach etz*, since he thought that the main motion of the axe was to be its downward swing, whereas in reality the direction of the enemy's effort was upward, heavenward.

6. The proof that my interpretation of their design is correct, is the way they chip away at the ornaments *pituche-ha* of the pieces left over after the temple itself burnt itself out. Surely this is an utterly futile activity unless it expressed their feeling of having vanquished G'd and what He stood for.

7. After all, they have already torched Your sanctuary and defiled the abode that bore Your name. Since they realized that the ornaments all had symbolic significance, they wanted to eradicate these symbols. They were aware that everything connected with the terrestrial temple reflected ideas present in the celestial temple, its counterpart.

If we do look at the first three words of the verse, we wonder why the Psalmist did not say *shilchu eysh BE-mikdashecha*, instead of *shilchu BA-eysh mikdashecha*? Besides, the whole expression of *shilchu* hardly fits if it is supposed to mean "they set fire". The commentators were forced to explain the meaning of the word as *hash-chatah*, destruction.

Perhaps the meaning is that even when the temple was ablaze already, they did not think they had taken enough revenge on G'd and His people, but they struck at the structure while it was burning, similar to what the brothers had done with Joseph's coat after they had stripped it off him. (Genesis 37,32) There is a dual meaning here. On the one hand, they executed G'd's will, i.e. He had sent a messenger to destroy the temple. However, they did not feel that

ו וְעַתָּה פִּתּוּחֶיהָ יָחַד בְּכַשִּׁיל וְכִילַפּוֹת יַהֲלֹמוּן׃
ז שִׁלְּחוּ בָאֵשׁ מִקְדָּשֶׁךָ לָאָרֶץ חִלְּלוּ מִשְׁכַּן-שְׁמֶךָ׃
ח אָמְרוּ בִלְבָּם נִינָם יָחַד שָׂרְפוּ כָל-מוֹעֲדֵי-אֵל בָּאָרֶץ׃
ט אֹתוֹתֵינוּ לֹא-רָאִינוּ אֵין-עוֹד נָבִיא וְלֹא-אִתָּנוּ יוֹדֵעַ עַד-מָה׃

they had been delegated by G'd, but did this on their own accord, of their own initiative. Hence the *piel*, strong form for the word *shilchu*.

Should we wonder why they did not desecrate the temple through an idol etc., perhaps the reason is that *la-aretz chile-lu*. Esau's idol is the *cherev*, the sword that he lives by. It represents the power of Satan/Samael in the ascendancy. They had desecrated *la-aretz* on earth, – the residence dedicated to Your name.

The whole exercise was to show that the sword had triumphed over the idea of *mikdashcha*, i.e. sanctity, holiness.

8. Israel's strength is in its mouth, however, i.e. *hakol kol ya-akov* (Genesis 27,22), especially when they unite in synagogues, since we have a tradition that prayer is effective only if the community is united. Therefore, out of fear that their combined prayers would prevail over them, the Romans said in their hearts "let us destroy them where they can exercise dominion together, *ninam yachad*, i.e. let us destroy all their meeting places, houses of prayer. (*Nin-am* from *Yinon*, the one who has dominion, the Messiah) Therefore they burned down all the *mo-adey el*, the synagogues.

9. Asaph, i.e. Israel, describing the long and bitter exile complains that whereas the evil tidings that had presaged this state of affairs had been fulfilled, we have neither prophet nor sage who can tell us when *ototeynu* the good prophecies concerning our future will be fulfilled. One recalls Rabbi Akivah and his colleagues who saw foxes prancing around on the temple Mount, and whereas Rabbi Akivah's companions burst out crying at the sight, Rabbi laughed. The reason he laughed was because until he had not seen the prophecy of Lamentations 5,18, that foxes would walk on Mount Zion fulfilled, he had not been confident that the more encouraging prophecies would be fulfilled, i.e. Zion becoming rebuilt and repopulated. (Obadiah 21, Micah chapter 4 etc.)

Our Psalmist here laments the fact that those latter prophecies remain as yet unfulfilled, *ad matay*, how long will they remain unfulfilled?

10Till when, O God, will the foe blaspheme, will the enemy forever revile Your name?
11Why do You hold back Your hand, Your right hand? Draw it out of Your bosom!
12O God, my king from of old, who brings deliverance throughout the land;
13it was You who drove back the sea with Your might, who smashed the heads of the monsters in the waters;
14it was You who crushed the heads of Leviathan, who left him as food for the denizens of the desert;

10. The Psalmist does not plead for redemption for Israel's sake, but for the sake of the Lord's name. Shall the enemy blaspheme Your name forever? The Psalmist is aware that man's curses are totally ineffective when directed at G'd, and that therefore G'd need not take defensive action. "Your name – because it is eternal, remains totally unaffected."

11. When the word *yad* is used without adjective, it always means the left hand. This means that the Psalmist here speaks about both of G'd's "hands". When the temple was destroyed, 2 aspects of G'd's Presence withdrew, the right i.e. *chessed* and the left, i.e. *gevurah*.

Concerning *chessed* it says "He withdrew His right hand because of the enemy" (Lamentations 2,3), and the *gevurah* was withdrawn heavenwards. The result was that retribution is not exacted from the enemies. In this way the warning G'd had issued to Israel about their having abandoned Him, had become true. This is why the prophet Jeremiah spoke of G'd only as *hagadol ve-hanorah*, the great and awesome one, omitting the attribute *hagibor* the mighty one, since it no longer manifested itself. (Jeremiah 32,18)

Since the prophet speaks about the gentiles who dance on the site the temple used to stand on, he felt impelled to make this change in the liturgy.

On the other hand, the men of the great Assembly reinstated use of the attribute of G'd, saying that though it may not be visible, G'd's ability to restrain Himself from punishing His detractors, is one of the greatest aspects of His *gevurah*, might. (Yuma 69)

Now to our verse. Asaph, in the name of the Jewish exiles at that time, says "we are very bothered, i.e. *tzor* at the insult to G'd's honour; how long will such blaspheming continue?! It is possible to answer this simply by saying "until we (Israel) cleanse ourselves from our sins etc." so that the world will be fit for both of these attributes of G'd to return to earth, the left in order to punish our enemies, and

י עַד-מָתַי אֱלֹהִים יְחָרֵף צָר יְנַאֵץ אוֹיֵב שִׁמְךָ לָנֶצַח:
יא לָמָּה תָשִׁיב יָדְךָ וִימִינֶךָ מִקֶּרֶב חֵיקְךָ כַּלֵּה:
יב וֵאלֹהִים מַלְכִּי מִקֶּדֶם פֹּעֵל יְשׁוּעוֹת בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ:
יג אַתָּה פוֹרַרְתָּ בְעָזְּךָ יָם שִׁבַּרְתָּ רָאשֵׁי תַנִּינִים עַל-הַמָּיִם:
יד אַתָּה רִצַּצְתָּ רָאשֵׁי לִוְיָתָן תִּתְּנֶנּוּ מַאֲכָל לְעָם לְצִיִּים:

the right in order to perform acts of loving kindness for us His people.

In order NOT to answer in such a way, we say "return for the sake of Your holy name, whom the oppressor insults otherwise". Do NOT wait till Your left and Your right hand returns to Your people when WE deserve it on account of OUR deeds. Why *tashiv yadcha* should You withdraw Your hand from the earth, to the hidden regions? deal with them instead *mikerev cheykcha kaleh* destroying them from beyond the dividing curtain that separates Your attributes from being manifest in this world!

cheyk would describe the heavenly regions immediately beyond the *rakiah*, outer space, the "highest" region of the physical world. If earth is the outermost emanation like the garment of a person, then the hair on a person's chest is like the *cheyk* the curtain, bosom, that is outside his *chazeh*, chest, his innermost being.

Alternately, *cheyk* may refer to the region of thought such as the heart. The Psalmist says "we know that Your heart does not reveal to Your mouth when You are going to do certain things" (such as the time of the redemption); but why not destroy those blasphemous sinners directly from the region of Your thoughts, instead of waiting till You can employ such visible attributes of Yourself as the *yadayim*, hands?

12. You do not need to wait until what You decree in heaven against Your enemies is executed by OUR fighting Your enemies on earth. Rather, as You have done on previous occasions, *mikedem* in bygone times, You can do without our participation. (compare Exodus 15,6 when You fought the Egyptians and we remained totally passive)

13. At that time "You parted the sea with Your might etc.", i.e. You smashed both the *saro shel mitzrayim*, Egypt's spiritual representative at the celestial Court, as well as the Egyptian army which had marched into the sea.

14. We know from Baba Batra 75 that in the future, G'd will feed

15it was You who released springs and torrents, who made mighty rivers run dry;
16the day is Yours, the night also; it was You who set in place the orb of the sun; You fixed all the boundaries of the earth;
17summer and winter – You made them.
18Be mindful of how the enemy blasphemes the LORD, how base people revile Your name.
19Do not deliver Your dove to the wild beast; do not ignore forever the band of Your lowly ones.
20Look to the covenant!
For the dark places of the land are full of the haunts of lawlessness.

the Leviathan to the righteous and build them shelter from the Leviathan's skin. Also, that G'd has castrated the male Levaithan and killed the female, salting away its flesh in anticipation of that day in the future when He can feed it to the *tzaddikim*.

Since You G'd have made all these preparations for the time of the redemption, the Psalmist asks, how long must the enemy insult You *ad matay yecheraf tzor* until You destroy him and bring on the redemption? have You perchance smashed Leviathan in order to feed its flesh to the *am letziyim*, a nation that lives in a spiritual wilderness? (*eretz tziyah* arid land)

Surely, You killed the Leviathan and preserved it to serve as food for the Jewish people! Why then do You want to delay that day?

15. The Psalmist reinforces this question by pointing to two acts of G'd that seem in sharp contrast with each other. On the one hand Your act was retribution for our enemy, on the other hand it was an act of mercy for us. You make fountains and wells come out of rock, i.e. dry areas; on the other hand, You dry out river beds. (compare Isaiah 48,21, "He split the rock and water gushed forth") On the other hand, You held back water from areas that are normally well supplied with water.

16. Similarly, You employ the attribute "day" i.e. the time frame reserved for execution of mercy, *rachamim*; but night time, i.e. the time frame reserved for the execution of judgment is also Yours. The proof that this is so is that You have set the moon, i.e. *ma-or* (light of the night) and *shemesh*, (light of the day) in their respective paths. *hachinota*, You have assigned them an orbit.

Our sages described Abraham's search for the true Master and Creator. When he saw the sun set, he concluded that this could not

טז אַתָּה בָקַעְתָּ מַעְיָן וָנָחַל אַתָּה הוֹבַשְׁתָּ נַהֲרוֹת אֵיתָן:
יז לְךָ יוֹם אַף-לְךָ לָיְלָה אַתָּה הֲכִינוֹתָ מָאוֹר וָשָׁמֶשׁ:
יח אַתָּה הִצַּבְתָּ כָּל-גְּבוּלוֹת אָרֶץ קַיִץ וָחֹרֶף אַתָּה
יְצַרְתָּם:
יט זְכָר-זֹאת אוֹיֵב חֵרֵף יְהוָה וְעַם-נָבָל נִאֲצוּ שְׁמֶךָ:
כ אַל-תִּתֵּן לְחַיַּת נֶפֶשׁ תּוֹרֶךָ חַיַּת עֲנִיֶּיךָ אַל-תִּשְׁכַּח
לָנֶצַח:
כא הַבֵּט לַבְּרִית כִּי-מָלְאוּ מַחֲשַׁכֵּי-אֶרֶץ נְאוֹת חָמָס:

be the ultimate authority, else why would the sun have to give way to the moon. When the moon gave way to the sun, Abraham reasoned that the moon could not be a deity either. When both reappeared at predictable intervals, Abraham concluded that they both must have a common Master.

In other words, the ability to make sun and moon orbit in a cycle that repeats itself, is part of the definition of what is G'd. (Sefer Hayashar Parshat Noach et al.) If there were two deities, one in charge of the sun, the other in charge of the moon etc., it would be impossible for the various planets and stars not to be on a collision course from time to time. So reasoned Abraham. As a result we know that the attributes night and day are manifestations of the same Power.

17. Similarly, You G'd have established cold zones, temperate zones and torrid zones, i.e. *hitzavta gevulot*, You have established limits to certain regions on earth. The proof that You established those zones and their limits is that You created summer and winter. He who created the seasons, surely is the One who set the limits to the various climactic regions on earth.

18. The Psalmist reverts to his query in verse 10 "how long will the oppressor be allowed to insult G'd?" Please consider how the enemy insulted the Lord etc. and punish them for the sake of Your name!

19. The *chayat* is the king of Babylonia, called *aryeh* as we know from Jeremiah 4,7 "the lion has come out of his thicket and destroys nations". The prophet refers to Nebuchadnezzar. The dove in our verse is Israel, a term used for Israel when it is on a high moral level. The Psalmist asks that Israel not be delivered into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar though they bowed to his idol.

He does not want G'd to forget the life of "Your poor ones", i.e. the Jews in the days of Haman.

21*Let not the downtrodden turn away disappointed; let the poor and needy praise Your name.*
22*Rise, O God, champion Your cause; be mindful that You are blasphemed by base men all day long.*
23*Do not ignore the shouts of Your foes, the din of Your adversaries that ascends all the time.*

75

For the leader; al tashheth.
A psalm of Asaph, a song.

20. And in the days of the Greek oppression, the Psalmist asks G'd to *habet el habrit*, look at the covenant which Antiochus tried to shatter. When the Edomites/Romans were full, they blackened the earth with their violence during the 4th exile. Tzor said "I will become filled through the destruction (of Jerusalem) (Ezekiel 26,2) As a result, Your son remain impoverished.

21. Let the crushed one not have to turn back in shame, the *dach* crushed one being the Messiah. He is know as *ani*, poor, as he will be coming on a donkey. (Zachariah 9,9) He is constantly trying to come and to orchestrate the redemption. Let the destitute praise Your name for keeping faith with them.

22. Therefore, rise o G'd and contend with Your adversaries. 1) with Nebuchadnezzar who contended with You when he put up the huge image and declared himself a deity. (Daniel 3) Another one who is Your adversary is Haman who had told Ahasverus that You were old and weak. He is a base person, *naval* who heaped shame on You incessantly. We explained this on the verse in Proverbs 30,22, *venaval ki yisba lechem*, a scoundrel sated with bread, i.e. Haman." This man was described as one of the types of people the earth cannot tolerate.

23. Concerning the oppression under the Greeks, Asaph reminds G'd that the suffering we went through (or better would have to go through), was really because the Greeks attacked G'd through us, i.e. *tzore-recha*, they wanted to oppress You. Concerning the present lengthy exile, the Psalmist says "(take a look) at the shouting of those who rise against You, and how this ascends constantly." This may be what the Midrash meant when it described 3 exiles in Jacob's dream as *olim veyordim*, ascending and descending, whereas the 4th exile is described as the oppressors constantly ascending. (Genesis 28,12)

Because the Romans are not described as descending also, the verse Obadiah 4 *im tagbiah kanesher misham oridcha ne-um*

כא אַל-יָשֹׁב דַּךְ נִכְלָם עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן יְהַלְלוּ שְׁמֶךָ:
כב קוּמָה אֱלֹהִים רִיבָה רִיבֶךָ זְכֹר חֶרְפָּתְךָ מִנִּי-נָבָל כָּל
-הַיּוֹם:
כג אַל-תִּשְׁכַּח קוֹל צֹרְרֶיךָ שְׁאוֹן קָמֶיךָ עוֹלֶה תָמִיד:

עה

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ אַל-תַּשְׁחֵת מִזְמוֹר לְאָסָף שִׁיר:

hashem, even if you climb as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there says the Lord, can be applied to them.

Another view of verse 19–23, briefly. We have explained on Psalms 68,31, that Amalek is called the *chayah kaneh*, the wild beast of the reed, since Rome was founded due to Solomon having married Pharoah's daughter and the angel, planting a reed. (Shabbat 56)

Since Israel is in need of two freedoms, one from the angel of death, the other from enslavement to other nations, Asaph first prays for freedom from the angel of death, i.e. Satan, i.e. *chaya nefesh*. Secondly, he prays for freedom from servitude, from exile, i.e. chayat aniyecha. Do not let the redemption wait *lanetzach*, forever, but accelerate it. – If Israel should be guilty of sins connected with greed for money, something that always irritates G'd, as per Isaiah 57,17, *ba-avon bitzo katzafti va-akehu*, I was angry because of its greed and struck them, this is serious. We know G'd brought the deluge because of that sin as soon as violent means were employed to satisfy the greed. (Genesis 6,13)

This sin abounds in Israel when it is in the fourth exile. The immediate cause of such greed is Israel's poverty in exile, something that can even lead to violence. Also, do not let the Mashiach ben Yoseph i.e. *dach nichlam ve-ani*, wait till he can perform his task. Concerning the other exiles too, seeing that the oppressors really aimed at You, using us as a scapegoat, please do not delay redemption!

Psalm 75

1. The triple introduction, *Lamnatzeach, mizmor* and *shir*, deserves our attention. The vanquished ones, i.e. Israel, pleading that G'd not destroy the earth and maintain it, recites a *mizmor*, hymn of thanks for this continued existence and G'd's wonderful deeds.

Although G'd considers hymns as something man deserves credit

[7]For what lifts a man comes not from the east or the west or the wilderness;
[8]for God it is who gives judgment; He brings down one man, He lifts up another.
[9]There is a cup in the LORD's hand with foaming wine fully mixed; from this He pours; all the wicked of the earth drink, draining it to the very dregs.
[10]As for me, I will declare forever, I will sing a hymn to the God of Jacob.
[11]"All the horns of the wicked I will cut; but the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up."

mazzal, horoscopic predetermination does preclude such a belief, and is bound to lead to outspoken denial or criticism of G'd.

This is what Solomon warned against when he said (Proverbs 30,9) "lest when I am sated I will deny G'd, saying who is G'd?" He refers to the denial of G'd's Personal Providence. This is also why the Psalmist uses the harsh *te-dabru* in this verse, i.e. "you would speak harshly with haughty neck". (compare *dibber ha-ish* in Genesis 42,30)

7. For the truth is that NEITHER from his point of departure, *motza*, i.e. from birth, the constellation governing that date indicating good fortune, nor from *ma-arav*, i.e. if the *mazzal* was in decline at that time, nor even when it seems to pass through the desert does the success i.e. *harem keren* depend.

8. Only G'd is the judge, He is the One who raises or lowers a person. The Psalmist stresses that it is G'd Himself who masterminds our fates according to our deeds at all times. Our sages have said that since G'd created the universe, (Bereshit Rabbah 68,4) He makes ladders, raising one person and lowering another, showing that success and failure do not depend on horoscopic constellations or personal effort. It is therefore better not to act too independently, and to trust in G'd. One should not waste one's life trying to achieve goals which are unattainable because they are not part of G'd's plan for one.

9. The Psalmist uses the hyperbole in this verse to answer those who ask if G'd is the author of everyone's fate, why do so many righteous suffer whereas many wicked people succeed?

G'd holds a cup of wine. It contains dregs at the bottom, a foaming mixture of wine and dregs in the middle, and clear wine at the top. The cup of wine represents justice, judgment. The word used for G'd here is *hashem* i.e. the attribute of mercy. He holds this

ז כִּי לֹא מִמּוֹצָא וּמִמַּעֲרָב וְלֹא מִמִּדְבַּר הָרִים׃
ח כִּי-אֱלֹהִים שֹׁפֵט זֶה יַשְׁפִּיל וְזֶה יָרִים׃
ט כִּי כוֹס בְּיַד-יְהוָה וְיַיִן חָמַר מָלֵא מֶסֶךְ וַיַּגֵּר מִזֶּה אַךְ
-שְׁמָרֶיהָ יִמְצוּ כֹּל רִשְׁעֵי-אָרֶץ׃
י וַאֲנִי אַגִּיד לְעֹלָם אֲזַמְּרָה לֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב׃
יא וְכָל-קַרְנֵי רְשָׁעִים אֲגַדֵּעַ תְּרוֹמַמְנָה קַרְנוֹת צַדִּיק׃

cup in His hand in order that some people should NOT drink from it prematurely. *chamar* means red, symbolizing judgment. *male mesech* it is tempered with mercy, i.e. G'd pours the waters of mercy into the "red" wine. When you see the righteous suffer, this is what they are given to drink. Drinking this mixture is an act of mercy for them, so that they will not later have to drink the undiluted dregs, the mass that has not been tempered by G'd's mercy. The wicked at first drink from the top of the cup, i.e. pure physical delight. But when the time comes for them to pay for their sins, they are given the dregs to drink, something of which they can drink only very little before it chokes them to death. They taste the fullness of G'd's anger.

10. The Psalmist, though aware that his chances of convincing the *hollelim*, the frivolous are very slim, nevertheless declares that he will do his duty and repeat the message that G'd supervises the fate of men and that fates are NOT predetermined, ad infinitum, i.e. *le-olam*.

11. The holy spirit responds in the name of G'd saying that the very patience G'd has displayed with the wicked will boomerang eventually. This is so because their sins keep accumulating during all the time G'd displays forbearance until finally He cuts down "the horns" of all the wicked while the righteous are being refined, and raise their own horns by themselves, not needing G'd's aid. The righteous have enough merits to rise to great heights.

A totally different approach to our chapter, based on the view of our sages expressed in Midrash Tehillim chapter 75, is that the theme of this hymn is G'ds having substituted punishment of Israel by punishment of the temple and the holy land. Exile substitutes for destruction of the Jewish people. (as explained in connection with Lamentations 4,11, in Kiddushin 30)

Asaph describes his personal experience as being an example of this principle. G'd had poured out His wrath on Korach's property as well as on Korach and the part of his family who had supported him.

[2]*We praise You, O God; we praise You; Your presence is near; men tell of Your wondrous deeds.*
[3]*"At the time I choose, I will give judgment equitably.*
[4]*Earth and all its inhabitants dissolve; it is I who keep its pillars firm.* Selah.
[5]*To wanton men I say, 'Do not be wanton!' to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horns!'"*
[6]*Do not lift your horns up high in vainglorious bluster.*

for composing, Asaph feels himself privileged to be allowed to recite the hymn. Therefore *le-asaph shir* is an acknowledgment of happiness that he has been found worthy to compose a Psalm.

2. The content of this song is *hodinu*, "we have given thanks to You". Commentators have said that the first *hodinu* refers to the first three benedictions in our *amidah* prayer, whereas the last *hodinu* refers to the last 3 benedictions in the same prayer, and that *karov shemecha*, Your name is close, refers to the closeness of G'd which can elicit responses from G'd such as the ones received by Rabbi Chiyah and his sons. (Baba Metzia 85) They did not have to wait till they made outright requests from G'd in the middle benedictions, but G'd responded as soon as they recited the *gevurot*, mighty deeds of G'd. All he and his sons had to do was to mention rain, and G'd would let it fall.

It is difficult to accept that *hodinu* should mean "we told of Your mighty deeds". If it did, why does Asaph have to go on to say *sippru ma-assecha*! they told Your mighty deeds?

It seems to me that Asaph's statement is similar to the Talmud which says that the *modim* prayer recited by the congregation consists primarily of the words *modim anachnu loch*, we thank You. The rest of the paragraph is of secondary significance. We thank the Lord to be in a position to thank Him. Asaph says "we thank the Lord to be able to thank You and be close to Your name". (Sotah 40)

Since man is too insignificant to praise the Lord, it is an act of grace by G'd to allow Himself to be praised by us. We thank G'd for being so close to Him, i.e. *karov shemecha*, that we are allowed to tell of His miracles.

3. However, it is even more remarkable that G'd considers a single commandment carried out by one individual properly as enough to justify keeping the universe from disintegrating. Our sages have said that anyone who pronounces true judgment is as if he were a partner to G'd in the creation of the universe. This partnership

ב הוֹדִינוּ לְךָ אֱלֹהִים הוֹדִינוּ וְקָרוֹב שְׁמֶךָ סִפְּרוּ
נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ:
ג כִּי אֶקַּח מוֹעֵד אֲנִי מֵישָׁרִים אֶשְׁפֹּט:
ד נְמוֹגִים-אֶרֶץ וְכָל-יֹשְׁבֶיהָ אָנֹכִי תִּכַּנְתִּי עַמּוּדֶיהָ סֶלָה:
ה אָמַרְתִּי לַהוֹלְלִים אַל-תָּהֹלּוּ וְלָרְשָׁעִים אַל-תָּרִימוּ
קָרֶן:
ו אַל-תָּרִימוּ לַמָּרוֹם קַרְנְכֶם תְּדַבְּרוּ בְצַוָּאר עָתָק:

expresses itself by G'd having created the universe and by man maintaining it. (Shabbat 10) Asaph says "when I take time i.e. *moed* – I shall judge properly, fairly.

4. Then, even if the whole earth has been condemned to be dissolved, I have supported its pillars – ultimately, i.e. *selah.*

5. Having described the tremendous potential man is equipped with, including the ability to be single handedly responsible for the continuance of the universe, – the Psalmist turns to the frivolous fools and says "do not indulge in your frivolities, i.e. how can you squander the opportunities G'd has given you?!"

– "Do not raise the horn", i.e. is it not enough that you waste your lives, do you have to encourage the wicked by YOUR wasteful lifestyle?

The Psalmist chides those who believe that only diligence is the key to success in life on earth. Since he does not say *al tehoilelu*, do not engage in frivolity, (something they do all their lives) but *al ta-holu*, the Psalmist means "do not commit the ultimate frivolity, namely to ascribe all success to diligence and thereby denying G'd's Personal Providence.

This leads the *resha-im*, the wicked to raise their horn, i.e. they reason that if there is no Personal Providence they will ignore G'd's ordinances... You, the normative Jews would be responsible for the delay in the punishment of the wicked, since you are partly responsible for their conduct. If they flourish, you have yourselves to blame.

6. When I said "do not be frivolous", I meant "do not credit your success to *marom*", horoscopic influences, constellations in the *rakia*. This would be even worse than merely crediting your own diligence with your success. After all, believing in diligence does not specifically exclude belief in *hashgachah*, Personal Providence, whereas belief in

7*For what lifts a man comes not from the east or the west or the wilderness;*
8*for God it is who gives judgment; He brings down one man, He lifts up another.*
9*There is a cup in the LORD's hand with foaming wine fully mixed; from this He pours; all the wicked of the earth drink, draining it to the very dregs.*
10*As for me, I will declare forever, I will sing a hymn to the God of Jacob.*
11*"All the horns of the wicked I will cut; but the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up."*

mazzal, horoscopic predetermination does preclude such a belief, and is bound to lead to outspoken denial or criticism of G'd.

This is what Solomon warned against when he said (Proverbs 30,9) "lest when I am sated I will deny G'd, saying who is G'd?" He refers to the denial of G'd's Personal Providence. This is also why the Psalmist uses the harsh *te-dabru* in this verse, i.e. "you would speak harshly with haughty neck". (compare *dibber ha-ish* in Genesis 42,30)

7. For the truth is that NEITHER from his point of departure, *motza*, i.e. from birth, the constellation governing that date indicating good fortune, nor from *ma-arav*, i.e. if the *mazzal* was in decline at that time, nor even when it seems to pass through the desert does the success i.e. *harem keren* depend.

8. Only G'd is the judge, He is the One who raises or lowers a person. The Psalmist stresses that it is G'd Himself who masterminds our fates according to our deeds at all times. Our sages have said that since G'd created the universe, (Bereshit Rabbah 68,4) He makes ladders, raising one person and lowering another, showing that success and failure do not depend on horoscopic constellations or personal effort. It is therefore better not to act too independently, and to trust in G'd. One should not waste one's life trying to achieve goals which are unattainable because they are not part of G'd's plan for one.

9. The Psalmist uses the hyperbole in this verse to answer those who ask if G'd is the author of everyone's fate, why do so many righteous suffer whereas many wicked people succeed?

G'd holds a cup of wine. It contains dregs at the bottom, a foaming mixture of wine and dregs in the middle, and clear wine at the top. The cup of wine represents justice, judgment. The word used for G'd here is *hashem* i.e. the attribute of mercy. He holds this

ז כִּי לֹא מִמּוֹצָא וּמִמַּעֲרָב וְלֹא מִמִּדְבַּר הָרִים׃
ח כִּי-אֱלֹהִים שֹׁפֵט זֶה יַשְׁפִּיל וְזֶה יָרִים׃
ט כִּי כוֹס בְּיַד-יְהוָה וְיַיִן חָמַר מָלֵא מֶסֶךְ וַיַּגֵּר מִזֶּה אַךְ
-שְׁמָרֶיהָ יִמְצוּ כֹּל רִשְׁעֵי-אָרֶץ׃
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cup in His hand in order that some people should NOT drink from it prematurely. *chamar* means red, symbolizing judgment. *male mesech* it is tempered with mercy, i.e. G'd pours the waters of mercy into the "red" wine. When you see the righteous suffer, this is what they are given to drink. Drinking this mixture is an act of mercy for them, so that they will not later have to drink the undiluted dregs, the mass that has not been tempered by G'd's mercy. The wicked at first drink from the top of the cup, i.e. pure physical delight. But when the time comes for them to pay for their sins, they are given the dregs to drink, something of which they can drink only very little before it chokes them to death. They taste the fullness of G'd's anger.

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Asaph describes his personal experience as being an example of this principle. G'd had poured out His wrath on Korach's property as well as on Korach and the part of his family who had supported him.

(Numbers 26,11.) This enabled G'd to spare Korach's sons who did not die.

The three *hodinu* refer to thanksgiving in the form of *hallel*, or *megillat Esther* for the various exiles we have been redeemed from. The redemption from Haman is called *karov shemecha*. (Erchin 10) All we had to do was to tell *niflotecha*, Your miracles, something equivalent to *hillula*, praise... Since Israel feels so depressed in this exile because it has no idea when this exile will end, G'd assures Israel that He Himself has not revealed the date to His "mouth". (Midrash Tehillim on chapter 9)

G'd explains that in Egypt the redemption date had to be advanced (before the 400 years were up). Had the Jews stayed in Egypt they would have forfeited their entitlement to redemption, having sunk so deeply into the abyss of Egyptian immorality. (Zohar)

Anyone calculating the time of redemption from the birth of Isaac, knows that the time was manipulated by Me, says G'd. *Ani meysharim eshpot*, I judge fairly – even if I have set a date, *ekach mo-ed*. The so called *mo-ed* may differ from what you thought it means.

This is why I told those who believe in horoscopes to cease doing so, i.e. NOT to give up hope that redemption cannot occur sooner. The reference is to the host nations who tell Israel that their redemption is not due yet. They will find out, just like the Egyptians did, that G'd's *machshavot*, calculations need not coincide with theirs. The Egyptians believed themselves secure, able to say *Mi hashem* who is G'd? because of the 400 years of slavery that had been foretold to Abraham, almost 200 years had not yet elapsed.

When Isaiah said (Isaiah 55,8) "My thoughts are not your thoughts", this is what he meant. Similarly, Isaiah warns people not to base their expectation of the future on their own interpretation of G'd's ways. (Isaiah 14,13–14) Haman too had miscalculated. When Jacob saw the spiritual force of Esau ascend but NOT descend (Tanchuma Vayetze 2), he had not realized that this apparently inexhaustible domain of Esau was not due to *motza*, i.e. the original Jew, Abraham who had come from the East, and not due to Isaac who had sojourned long in the West (the land of the Philistines). He also did not think that Esau's power was due to the sin of the golden calf, i.e. *midbar*. It could not have stemmed from that sin, since G'd had accepted Israel's repentance and let them build the tabernacle. The fact is that Esau's greatness will come to an end when Jacob arises, *ki elokim shofet*, G'd Himself judges and raises the one while lowering the other. Israel's suffering will continue until the measure of Esau/Edom is full, and while you have tasted the sediments in the cup in a very diluted form and only at intervals, Esau will have to drink the dregs all at once, undiluted, and will perish in the process. At that time Jacob will arise spontaneously, victoriously.



The Book of Psalms

with

Romemot El

רוממות אל

Commentary of Rabbi Moshe ben Chayim Alshech (hakadosh) translated and condensed by Eliyahu MUNK

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Rabbi Moshe ben Chayim Alshech (hakadosh) *was born in Adrianople 1508, and died in Damascus about 1600. He was Rabbi in Safed and Damascus, ordained by Rabbi Yoseph Karo. Though he published 140 halachic responsa, his fame spread as the most popular preacher of the century. His Torah commentary is based on sermons delivered during his lifetime. He also wrote commentaries on almost the entire Bible. His allegorical method of interpretation plus his meticulous attention to the fine points of the written text, represent a happy medium between the rational and the mystical approach. He emphasizes first and foremost the* Mussar, *ethical moral content of the Torah.*

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Excerpts from reviews: (Rabbi Balkind, Manchester, Jewish Tribune, London)

"Eliyahu Munk has put all levels of our people in his debt having made such a great contribution to the better understanding of our holy Torah... many interesting questions and wonderful answers etc. are fluently described and demonstrate the great understanding of the author. I predict that this Alshich edition will gain popularity among ordinary people and intellectuals alike...

Jerusalem Post, Rabbi A. Carlebach. Munk has once more succeeded in presenting a very readable English version of the original, providing also an index of biblical, talmudic and midrashic sources quoted as well as a list of topics dealt with by the author...

The Book of Psalms

VOLUME II

with

Romemot El

commentary

by Rabbi Moshe ben Chayim Alshich (hakadosh)

translated and condensed by

Eliyahu Munk

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עו א לַמְנַצֵּחַ בִּנְגִינֹת מִזְמוֹר לְאָסָף שִׁיר:
ב נוֹדָע בִּיהוּדָה אֱלֹהִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גָּדוֹל שְׁמוֹ:
ג וַיְהִי בְשָׁלֵם סֻכּוֹ וּמְעוֹנָתוֹ בְצִיּוֹן:

76 *For the leader; with instrumental music.*
A psalm of Asaph, a song.
[2]*God has made Himself known in Judah, His name is great in Israel;*
[3]*Salem became His abode; Zion, His den.*

Psalm 76

2. Midrash Tehillim in our verse comments that the gentile nations who observe the 10 tribes being exiled, whereas Yehudah and Benjamin are spared, interpret this as G'd playing favorites with the latter tribes, seeing that it is they on whose territory the temple is located. This makes these tribes G'd's host in their eyes.

Once Yehudah and Benjamin are exiled also, G'd says "I have demonstrated My faithfulness, i.e. the fact that I do not have favorites. (Hoseah 5,9)

Our sages therefore conclude that the meaning of our verse is that G'd showed the gentiles His impartiality. If that were so, – why does the Psalmist say that G'd's name was great "in Israel"? It had been the gentiles who had spoken about G'd having favorites, i.e. Yehudah and Benjamin! The Psalmist should have said that G'd's name was great "amongst the nations"!

We read in Eycha Rabbati 1, that it was the 10 tribes themselves who had accused G'd of favouring Yehudah and Benjamin, but that when they heard about Yehudah and Benjamin going into exile also, they admitted that they had been wrong.

However, the comment in Eycha Rabbati does NOT quote our verse as proof. Perhaps we simply see Asaph as the originator of these comments, namely, that once the judging hand of G'd i.e. *elokim became known also in Yehudah, –then G'd's name was great in all of Israel. The elokim* then is the reference to the destruction of the temple.

3. Although the temple, i.e. His residence was in Zion, He became known in Israel by the judging hand applied against Yehudah.

[4]*There He broke the fiery arrows of the bow, the shield and the sword of war.* Selah.
[5]*You were resplendent, glorious, on the mountains of prey.*
[6]*The stout-hearted were despoiled; they were in a stupor; the bravest of men could not lift a hand.*
[7]*At Your blast, O God of Jacob, horse and chariot lay stunned.*

4. In fact in the very place where He had His residence, He broke the arrow of the bow, i.e. He despatched His angels (messengers) on missions of destruction. This is a reference to the Midrash Tehillim on Psalm 69 that G'd saw that if He had allowed these forces (*aph* and *chemah*) free reign against Israel, no Jew would have remained alive. Therefore, He activated these forces against Zion, in order to blunt their destructive power. This is what is meant by Lamentations 4,11 "G'd's anger was exhausted". He poured out His anger by setting fire to Zion. This is what our verse here refers to when the Psalmist says *magen*, that Zion acted as a shield for Yehudah. (verse 3)

By absorbing the wrath of G'd, the temple enabled Israel to survive. It is the function of the shield to absorb the blows intended for its owner. Nonetheless, the tribe of Yehudah was not protected totally. The temple succeeded only in insuring Yehudah's survival, but *cherev u-milchamah*, sword and warfare were still experienced by Yehudah *selah*, on an ongoing basis. It became clear that G'd did not only not favour Yehudah, the tribe that housed His temple, but even destroyed His own abode. Hence He did not spare His host the experience of bloody warfare.

5. This is the reaction of the Jewish people when they heard that G'd had blunted the edge of His anger by destroying the temple rather than by destroying His people. They realized that this is the answer to the question which had always plagued them, how G'd could allow the pagans who had destroyed the temple to dance on its site and blaspheme? The people had asked "where are G'd's *nora-ot* awe inspiring deeds?"

This had been the reason the prophet Jeremiah had removed that attribute of G'd from the daily *amidah* prayer, and why Daniel had omitted the attribute of *gibor* the mighty one, from the same prayer. (Yuma 69)

Now Israel acknowledges that both of these attributes of G'd were very much in evidence during the destruction of the temple, though Israel had not appreciated this at the time. The meaning of

ה שָׁמָה שָׁבַר רִשְׁפֵי-קֶשֶׁת מָגֵן וְחֶרֶב וּמִלְחָמָה סֶלָה:
ו נָאוֹר אַתָּה אַדִּיר מֵהַרְרֵי-טָרֶף:
ז אֶשְׁתּוֹלְלוּ אַבִּירֵי לֵב נָמוּ שְׁנָתָם וְלֹא-מָצְאוּ כָל-
אַנְשֵׁי-חַיִל יְדֵיהֶם:
ח מִגַּעֲרָתְךָ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב נִרְדָּם וְרֶכֶב וָסוּס:

na-or then is *nora*. In other words, Your awesomeness was really displayed against the gentiles as we see from the translation of our verse by Onkelos, who translates *na-or* as *dechil*, frightening. You also displayed *gevurah*, mighty deeds, i.e. *adir*.

6. This problem which we have now solved, has bothered me so much, says Israel, that it had confounded such outstanding figures as Jeremiah and Daniel when they observed the blasphemous behaviour of the conquerors of Jerusalem and the temple.

They had concluded that G'd had chosen NOT to display those two attributes of His.

After *namu shenotam*, these two great people had gone to sleep, i.e. died, the men of the great assembly, *anshey chayil* did not summon the courage *yadayim* to explain the true reason Daniel and Jeremiah respectively had omitted mention of those attributes of G'd. They reinstated use of these attributes. They knew that neither Jeremiah nor Daniel i.e. the *abirey lev*, men of great courage, had doubted G'd in any way. In fact, the reason their death is described by the Psalmist as merely "light sleep" is so that no one should think that their death was a punishment for their having done something which could be interpreted as a lack of faith on their part.

The fact that the *anshey chayil*, the leaders of Israel at the time of the destruction reinstated the use of the two attributes of G'd mentioned is, that they wondered why the heroes of Israel "did not find their hands", i.e. did not defend themselves with their customary valour against their attackers when Jerusalem had been under attack.

They concluded that this absence of fighting spirit was in itself a clear demonstration of the awesome power of G'd who had paralyzed all the people psychologically at that time.

7. They had become like *redumim*, stunned into sleep by Your anger, they as well as their horses and their riders. This was due to the fear of G'd that had overcome them when they realized how sinful their lives had been. The reference by the Psalmist to *elokey Ya-akov*, instead of *elokey Yisrael* indicates the low moral level Israel had been at at that time.

[8]*O You! You are awesome!*
Who can withstand You when You are enraged?
[9]*In heaven You pronounced sentence; the earth was numbed with fright*
[10]*as God rose to execute judgment, to deliver all the lowly of the earth.* Selah.
[11]*The fiercest of men shall acknowledge You, when You gird on the last bit of fury.*

8. It follows that the attribute *norah* had NEVER been withheld, it had only assumed unusual manifestations, i.e. against Israel's leaders instead of against its enemies. Therefore, You, who used to be described as *attah norah*, are still the same One, are still *nora*. You have not changed, and once You display anger who can stand up against You?

Since this is so, the only reason You displayed such patience with those who destroyed Your temple, who blaspheme, boast etc. etc., is that if You had dealt with them at the time, You would have had to deal with Israel first, concerning its accumulated guilt. Had this been the case, Israel would have ceased to exist. Therefore, You displayed forbearance so that Your anger could be vented on Zion and the holy temple. This is the thrust of the verses following even though the subject had briefly been touched on in verse 4.

9. Now the Psalmist explains why the tribes of Yehudah and Benjamin were not exiled at the same time as the other 10 tribes. In Pessikta Rabbati 21,3, we read that when the earth heard that G'd was about to give Israel a string of commandments, it became frightened. Recalling that Adam who had violated the one commandment G'd had given him, and whose violation had resulted in the earth being cursed, (Genesis 3,17) earth reasoned that now that many sins could be committed, she would be cursed even more.

This is the meaning of our verse "when You announced commandments, *din* from heaven, the earth became afraid.

However, when the earth heard the 10 commandments (Exodus 20,2) having first feared, it quieted down". We need to understand this paradox. If there had been reason for the earth to be afraid, what made her quiet down? If earth had reason to be calm, why was she first afraid?

We will follow the path taken by the Talmud in Shabbat 88. In Shittim, at Arvot Moav, it had first been G'd's intention to destroy Israel, had not Pinchas stepped into the breach and executed G'd's judgment against Zimri. (Numbers 25,11) Since not every generation

ח אַתָּה נוֹרָא אַתָּה וּמִי-יַעֲמֹד לְפָנֶיךָ מֵאָז אַפֶּךָ:
ט מִשָּׁמַיִם הִשְׁמַעְתָּ דִּין אֶרֶץ יָרְאָה וְשָׁקָטָה:
י בְּקוּם-לַמִּשְׁפָּט אֱלֹהִים לְהוֹשִׁיעַ כָּל-עַנְוֵי-אֶרֶץ סֶלָה:
יא כִּי-חֲמַת אָדָם תּוֹדֶךָּ שְׁאֵרִית חֵמוֹת תַּחְגֹּר:

possesses men of the caliber of Pinchas who can arrest G'd's anger by their noble deeds, G'd announced through Moses in His Torah, that the very earth itself could serve as a scapegoat for Israel, i.e. *ve-chipper admoto ammo.* (Deut. 29,21)

This is what the comment of the gentiles is all about when they see the destruction wrought in the holy land. The nations had wondered why the earth which had NOT sinned, should be punished as stated in Deut. 29,23, only to be told in the next verse that it had all been due to Israel's having broken its covenant with G'd by serving idols etc.

Such conduct would normally have resulted in the extinction of the people guilty of such behaviour. G'd however, vented His anger on the wood and stones of the holy land, and exiled the people thereon. In this way He assuaged His anger so that the next generation of Israel remained alive.

The Psalmist says that ever since the events at Shittim, G'd had made it clear that destroying the land was a means of achieving partial atonement. This is why, since that time, the earth had reason to be afraid. It quieted down however, when it realized it had absorbed punishment and thereby saved the Jewish people from extinction.

10. The system whereby G'd arises and executes judgment on the earth (instead of on the people) enables all the ***anvey eretz*** meek of the land of all future generations to experience salvation, since otherwise they would never have been born, seeing G'd would have wiped out their ancestors. ***selah***, i.e. G'd's actions at the time of the destruction of the temple has an impact on all future generations. This is why the ***anavim*** are called ***anvey eretz***, seeing the blow the earth has absorbed saves them and their future.

11. Although we have said in verse 4 that G'd applied His anger to the earth and has demonstrated this by letting the temple burn down etc., this was not enough to wipe out all the sins of Israel that had accumulated.

The suffering through sword and war of subsequent generations is in respect of those sins that had not then been wiped out. G'd's patience had been so outstanding in holding back execution of the

12*Make vows and pay them to the LORD your God; all who are around Him shall bring tribute to the Awesome One.*
13*He curbs the spirit of princes, inspires awe in the kings of the earth.*

77 *For the leader; on Jeduthun. Of Asaph. A psalm.*
2*I cry aloud to God; I cry to God that He may give ear to me.*

balance of His judgments, that we thank Him for NOT employing His *chemah* as humans would have done.

Humans become consumed by their anger, cannot control it; G'd remains in control of His feelings at all times. Bereshit Rabbah 49,8 explains this quoting Nachum 1,2 "while G'd takes revenge, He remains in control of His anger". We have explained the difference anger makes to humans when compared to G'd in Proverbs 6,34. It says there "for the jealousy of an angry man does not allow him to show pity on the day of vengeance". This is quite different from G'd, of whom we read in Numbers 12,9, that "He was angry with them and departed".

Had G'd allowed Himself to be angry in verse 4 of that chapter (based on the sequence of events), Aaron and Miriam would have been killed right away. He would not even have spoken to them. However, He restrained His anger until after He had spoken to them.

The Psalmist means here that if the behaviour of man when angry, would be similar to the behaviour of G'd under stress, we would have no reason to thank Him for being angry, i.e. *ki chemat adam.* As it is, we thank YOU that the balance of Your anger *she-erit chemot* was delayed, i.e. that You restrained our enemies *tachgor* from completing their impulse at the time of destroying us totally.

12. The term *mora* is used for the recipient of the gifts from all those other than Israel. We would have expected the recipient to have been described as either *hashem* or *elokim.* Also, why is the first half of the verse in direct language, whereas the second half is written in indirect language, the bearer of the gifts not even being addressed?

The matter is similar to Isaiah 55,14, when the prophet addresses Israel saying "YOU will be established through *tzedakah,* righteousness and charitable deeds, – whereas in Isaiah 1,27 the same prophet says "HER repentant ones through righteousness and

יב נִדְרוּ וְשַׁלְּמוּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כָּל-סְבִיבָיו יוֹבִילוּ שַׁי
לַמּוֹרָא:
יג יִבְצֹר רוּחַ נְגִידִים נוֹרָא לְמַלְכֵי-אָרֶץ:

עז א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-יְדִיתוּן לְאָסָף מִזְמוֹר:
ב קוֹלִי אֶל-אֱלֹהִים וְאֶצְעָקָה קוֹלִי אֶל-אֱלֹהִים וְהַאֲזִין
אֵלָי:

charity". The word *veshave-ha* can mean that someone has delayed, is late *bitzedakah*, i.e. in giving charity.

The prophet tells Israel they should know that the key to redemption is *tzedakah*, – but be careful that if you make charitable vows to pay them promptly. The word *kol sevivav* refers to the *tzaddikim* surrounding G'd, as we know from Psalms 50,3 *u-sevivav nisarah me-od*, it is very stormy around Him. Or, the Psalmist includes all of Israel in his comment. In that case *sevivav* as in Isaiah 60,21, "your people are all righteous".

The Psalmist may be paraphrasing the statement of Rabbi Eleazar in Baba Batra 9, who says that "if you have donated charity, all well and good"; if not, the gentile nations will come and take your money by force of arms. If you pledge and pay, says G'd, I will speak to you directly; if not, I not only turn my face away from you, i.e. do not address you directly, but what YOU should have given will be presented by the gentile nations all around, by those who are possessed by *mora* fear and respect for G'd.

13. If someone can curb the spirit of the avaricious leaders who are uncharitable *negidim*, and he can persuade them to become charitable, *nora lemalchey eretz*, then the kings of the nations will be in awe of such a person because his accomplishment is so great.

Psalm 77

2. All the commentators are agreed that this Psalm is about the long and tedious exile we find ourselves in at present, and that the various people that voice their feelings in this Psalm are all doing so because their pleas have not yet been answered. This requires them to prod G'd repeatedly etc.

Since it could be that after a number of unrequited prayers the

3*In my time of distress I turn to the Lord, with my hand [uplifted]; [my eyes] flow all night without respite; I will not be comforted.*
4*I call God to mind, I moan, I complain, my spirit fails.* Selah.
5*You have held my eyelids open; I am overwrought, I cannot speak.*
6*My thoughts turn to days of old, to years long past.*

petitioner might begin to doubt G'd, His power or willingness to respond, – the Psalmist says that if G'd did not respond the first time, perhaps it was because all his heart had not been in his prayer. Therefore, *ve-etzakah*, I will cry out, i.e. with all my heart, and then I will be heard. This is in accordance with G'd's promise in Deut. 4,29, "if you will seek out the Lord from there, you will find Him, provided you do so with all your heart and all your soul".

Koli el hashem would mean when ONLY my voice cried out and not my heart, this was not sufficient. This is why I had to plead with G'd once more with all my heart and soul. The prophet Hoseah 7,14, makes a similar point when he says "they did not cry out to Me from their heart."

I plead that my previous lack of concentration will not be held against me now, and that You will not leave me in my pain but that I will be heard.

3. When I said that I had raised my voice to G'd, I referred to the daytime of my troubles, and I sought out *a-do-nay* i.e. the *Shechinah* which supposedly is in exile with me. I requested to be saved from my problems. Then I noticed that instead of receiving succour, my hand melted away into night which is supposed to be a time of relief through the sleep it offers. Therefore, my soul refused to be comforted and I had no more strength to suffer these troubles. As a result, – *ve-etzakah*, I cried out.

4. When I said afterwards "my voice – to G'd, I will be heard", this means that I realized that G'd had been quite right in not responding to me since I had acted foolishly.

How could I have been foolish enough to address myself to the *Shechinah* which is also in exile about MY troubles instead of expressing my painful concern for the fact that the *Shechinah* had exiled itself on my account. Had I done so, You would have hastened to save me first, as we know from Baba Kama 92 that anyone who prays for someone else to be relieved from a pain which he suffers from himself, will be answered by G'd on a priority basis.

ג בְּיוֹם צָרָתִי אֲדֹנָי דָּרָשְׁתִּי יָדִי לַיְלָה נִגְּרָה וְלֹא תָפוּג
מֵאֲנָה הִנָּחֵם נַפְשִׁי:
ד אֶזְכְּרָה אֱלֹהִים וְאֶהֱמָיָה אָשִׂיחָה וְתִתְעַטֵּף רוּחִי סֶלָה:
ה אָחַזְתָּ שְׁמֻרוֹת עֵינָי נְפְעַמְתִּי וְלֹא אֲדַבֵּר:
ו חִשַּׁבְתִּי יָמִים מִקֶּדֶם שְׁנוֹת עוֹלָמִים:

Therefore, I expressed my concern for G'd and my agitation over the fact that the *Shechinah* is in *galut* exile, something I had not done previously.

The word *e-he-mayah* can be split into *home-yah*, i.e. "having pity about the 2 lettered name of G'd". G'd does not appear in His full glory of the 4 lettered name while He is still engaged in battling Amalek. (Exodus 17,16). G'd's battle on our behalf against Amalek is as yet inconclusive because of our sins. All this is hinted at in the choice of *ehema-yah* by the Psalmist rather than the plain *va-ehemah*. It is most appropriate for us to grieve over this ongoing situation. I have learned to transfer my self pity to my concern for the *Shechinah*, as we know from Proverbs 12,25, "when someone is troubled – he should tell outsiders about it, in order to unburden his heart". (Yuma 75) I have experienced the opposite, says Asaph. Through referring to my troubles in my prayers, I became so full of the subject as if I had wrapped up my spirit completely in that subject matter. It bothered me so to realize that I have been the cause of the exile of the *Shechinah*.

5. The commentators understand *shemurot eynayim* as eyelids. If that were so, the Psalmist should have said *shomrot*, not *shemurot*. Therefore, I think that *shemurot ayin* refers to *bat ayin*, the pupil of the eye. *Shemurot* in the plural refers to both pupils, both of which are guarded by the *afapayim*, the eyelids.

We have an explicit verse describing the pupils as being guarded like eyeballs, in Psalms 17,8. The Psalmist, i.e. Israel, says that originally "I was only preoccupied with my own troubles, ignoring the fact that You G'd are also with me in my troubles. Now however, that I have displayed awareness of Your exile (*Shechinah*), You have seized my pupils so that they focus on You and the exile You are in. As a result, I am so overwhelmed that I cannot even speak about my own troubles.

6. After a while I got to thinking about the days of *kedem*, i.e. the days of creation and the Sabbath that followed them.

These represent 6000 years of history plus the 7th millenium as

7I recall at night their jibes at me; I commune with myself; my spirit inquires,
8"Will the Lord reject forever and never again show favor?
9Has His faithfulness disappeared forever?
Will His promise be unfulfilled for all time?
10Has God forgotten how to pity?
Has He in anger stifled His compassion?" Selah.
11And I said, "It is my fault that the right hand of the Most High has changed."

the prelude to renewal of the universe, resurrection and Messianic bliss.

The 7th millenium is also referred to as ***olam haba***, "the world to come". It is also known in the language of our sages as the world of the Sabbath, since those years will embody both spiritual and physical aspects. The Psalmist says "it depressed me to realize that according to this forecast, the Messiah would not appear till shortly before the end of the 6th millenium." (about as much sooner as the time elapsed between the morning of the 6th day of creation and Adam's creation on that day)

Due to our sins, a major part of that millenium has elapsed without the Messiah having made his appearance.

7. Should You try and console me by saying that the coming of the Messiah can be accelerated by Torah study at night, as we know from Lamentations 2,19, and the comment of Maimonides in chapter 3 of Hilchot Talmud Torah, – the Psalmist quotes his personal example of devoting most of the night to Torah study which has not yet resulted in the arrival of the Messiah.

He also says that it is possible that the quality of his Torah study was inadequate, and that this is the reason G'd has not yet responded to his prayer, whereas He would have responded if his Torah study had involved both the ***yetzer hara***, evil urge and not only the ***yetzer hatov*** good urge. We know that this makes a difference from Deut. 4,29, "when in trouble you can find G'd PROVIDED you look for Him with all your heart and all your soul".

The best way to do ***teshuvah***, to perfect one's character and deeds is by isolating oneself first, and engaging in a confrontation with one's inner self in the awareness that one has to render an accounting to G'd for one's actions.

One becomes ashamed and realizes that the essence of man is really his soul and not his flesh, – as the Torah implies when it says in

ז אֶזְכְּרָה נְגִינָתִי בַּלַּיְלָה עִם-לְבָבִי אָשִׂיחָה וַיְחַפֵּשׂ
רוּחִי:
ח הַלְעוֹלָמִים יִזְנַח אֲדֹנָי וְלֹא-יֹסִיף לִרְצוֹת עוֹד:
ט הֶאָפֵס לָנֶצַח חַסְדּוֹ גָּמַר אֹמֶר לְדֹר וָדֹר:
י הֲשָׁכַח חַנּוֹת אֵל אִם-קָפַץ בְּאַף רַחֲמָיו סֶלָה:
יא וָאֹמַר חַלּוֹתִי הִיא שְׁנוֹת יְמִין עֶלְיוֹן:

Exodus 30,32, that the oil used to anoint the holy vessels and the High Priest must not be used on a person's flesh. (body) This means that *bassar* is secondary to *adam*. "*al bessar* (*semichut*) *adam lo yissach*".

The Psalmist describes the soul engaged in a dialogue with the heart, i.e. man's two urges. When they make a balance sheet of merits and demerits and decide to correct whatever needs correcting, they then return to G'd with both hearts. Since it is the soul which takes the initiative in this search for the right path in life, the Psalmist says *va-yechapes ruchi*, my spirit did the searching. By doing so, it fulfilled the plea of the prophet Jeremiah in Lamentations 3,40 "let us search and examine our ways and return" (to G'd).

8. Having done all this, the Psalmist wonders how much longer G'd can reject Israel? Will He never show favour again?

9. In the event that all His promises to us were based on the accumulated merits of our patriarchs, and that these have been used up through our many sins, this is not sufficient reason to withhold redemption. Surely G'd's own reservoir of loving kindness has not been used up!

After all, G'd has promised to battle Amalek *midor dor*, from generation to generation but not *lanetzach*, forever! (Exodus 17,16) We know that on the day G'd takes His revenge on Amalek, the redemption will arrive also! This is so because we read in Isaiah 63,4 "for I had planned a day of vengeance, and my year of redemption had arrived".

10. Should You claim that we are not deserving of redemption, we do not accept this since You Yourself have stated (Exodus 33,1) "I will grant grace and I will have mercy", i.e. that G'd will show mercy also to those who do not deserve it. Surely G'd has not forgotten this statement? has He *kafatz* squeezed shut His mercy forever?

11. Having examined all the alternatives for the interminably long exile, I have come to the conclusion that *chaloti* my sickness is what

12I recall the deeds of the LORD; yes, I recall Your wonders of old;
13I recount all Your works; I speak of Your acts.
14O God, Your ways, are holiness; what god is as great as God?
15You are the God who works wonders; You have manifested Your strength among the peoples.

is the cause of it all. That means that the cause of the long exile lies within me, not within G'd, says the Psalmist.

My spiritual sickness, i.e. my sins have changed, i.e. *shenot* the practice of G'd to use his *yemin*, right hand to pour His blessings on us directly to pouring it on the gentile nations (who are our hosts in exile, though our enemies) so that part of their own well being will result in a measure of well being for us.

This is what the exile of the *Shechinah* which is the conduit of G'd's largesse for *eretz yisrael* has brought about. This activity of G'd has been transferred to *chitzonim*, people not really deserving of it. The kabbalists say that this is more galling for the *Shechinah* than death itself.

The Psalmist hints by the word *elyon* that whereas G'd remains supreme, nonetheless it is we who have suffered. Even if the *Shechinah* is in exile, it remains *elyon*, most high.

12. Having given a reason for the long duration of this terrible exile, the Psalmist wants to say some words of comfort, something that will raise Israel's hopes that G'd will not forget it forever. It is that surely G'd did not perform all the wondrous deeds such as the miracles surrounding the Exodus from Egypt, – deeds never equalled since Creation for nothing.

Therefore, *ezkor*, I want to remember and to remind Israel of all this. Even though we ourselves have not witnessed the coming into existence of the universe, what we have witnessed during the period preceding the Exodus was a model of the process which brought the universe into existence.

In our commentary on the Torah, we explained that the 10 plagues paralleled the 10 directives with which G'd created the world. (this in greater detail in Rabbi Yitzchak Arama's Akeydat Yitzchak)

By referring to the *m-allaley Y-H*, the Psalmist refers to both the world created by the letter *yud*, i.e. the celestial regions as well as to the world created with the letter *heh*, i.e. our terrestrial world. (compare Isaiah 26,4 that G'd created 2 worlds by using the letters *yud* and *heh* respectively. Menachot 29)

יב אֶזְכִּיר מַעַלְלֵי-יָהּ כִּי-אֶזְכְּרָה מִקֶּדֶם פִּלְאֶךָ׃
יג וְהָגִיתִי בְכָל-פָּעֳלֶךָ וּבַעֲלִילוֹתֶיךָ אָשִׂיחָה׃
יד אֱלֹהִים בַּקֹּדֶשׁ דַּרְכֶּךָ מִי-אֵל גָּדוֹל כֵּאלֹהִים׃
טו אַתָּה הָאֵל עֹשֵׂה פֶלֶא הוֹדַעְתָּ בָעַמִּים עֻזֶּךָ׃

When I recall Your *pilecha*, Your miracles, this proves that it was You who had created the universe, i.e. *mikedem*. Only He who had created the universe could have been able to work the miracles performed at the Exodus.

13. Conversely, had You not demonstrated Your miracles in Egypt, I never would have acquired even an inkling of how You created the universe. Man is not equipped to unravel the secrets of how the universe was created, unless G'd had given him these examples, i.e. the miracles performed in Egypt during the 10 plagues.

This is why our sages say in Bereshit Rabbah 9,1 that what transpired prior to *vayechullu hashamayim* etc. is beyond us." (Genesis 2,1) They base this on Proverbs 25,2 "it is the glory of G'd to conceal matters, whereas it is the glory of a king to investigate and reveal things".

(*Elokim* is understood to have spoken in Genesis from 1,1 to 2,1; after that *melachim*, kings spoke. This means that from then on G'd related to His creatures as king)

The Psalmist acknowledges his own limitations, saying *hagiti*, I articulated, but not *chakarti*, I investigated all of Your acts. Concerning *alilotecha* i.e. what You have accomplished subsequent to the stage of *va-yechullu*, I tell about, since it is proof that it was You who had also performed before *va-yechullu*.

14. Had I NOT performed those miracles, – man would NOT have associated the creation of the physical universe with Me, says G'd, but would have thought that My activities are confined to the *kodesh*, the sacred, the spiritual, the abstract.

Another reason man would not have credited G'd with creating the physical universe is that a physical king NEEDS his subjects, his country etc. Not so G'd. Since He has no physical needs, why would He concern Himself with creating a physical universe? For these reasons it required the demonstrations of the miracles in Egypt to convince people that You had created the physical universe.

15. It is not possible to argue that the reason You created the universe was the need to demonstrate that You are indeed the *baal hachessed* the One who is full of loving kindness, since we know

16By Your arm You redeemed Your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.
17The waters saw You, O God, the waters saw You and were convulsed; the very deep quaked as well.
18Clouds streamed water; the heavens rumbled; Your arrows flew about;

olam chessed yibaneh, that the universe is built on loving kindness. (Psalms 83,3)

The fact is that that *chessed* was not meant for the pagans. On the contrary, when You display *pele*, miracles showing Your greatness, You do so by judging the gentiles. How then could the world have been created in order to prove to the gentiles that You are *chessed* personified?

16. The kindness You have performed is ALL for the sake of Israel, since You employed Your "outstretched arm (Deut. 4,34) to liberate Israel from Pharaoh and Egypt. All this proves that You created the universe only on account of Israel. Since this is so, the thought that You could forget us indefinitely is quite unthinkable!

The Psalmist refers to Israel as *beney Yaakov* and *beney Yoseph*. Since, at the time of the Exodus, Israel in common with all the other nations had been idol worshippers, one could argue by what right G'd had called them "My nation" already many months prior to the Exodus? (Exodus 3,7 and 3,10)

We read in Mechilta Bo section 5, that Israel possessed 4 virtues when they were in Egypt which were unique and made them worth saving. They retained their Jewish names, were chaste and faithful marriage partners, did not reveal secrets entrusted to them and retained the Hebrew tongue. (They did not reveal to the Egyptians that they would ask their neighbors for their silver and gold, something they had been told in Exodus 3,22, but which did not come to pass till Exodus 12,35.)

In this way they always remained recognizable as *beney yaakov*, descendants of Jacob, as Jews. Concerning their discretion and their chastity, they are called *beney Yoseph*, since Joseph had remained chaste in the most trying circumstances. Joseph had also demonstrated discretion by not revealing his whereabouts to his father for 22 years because he did not want to implicate his brothers and be the cause of their father possibly cursing them.

There was justification then for G'd to view us as "My people" even prior to our ancestors having risked death by keeping and slaughtering the Passover lamb. Since You demonstrated acts simulating the process of creation prior to our Exodus, it is clear that

טז גָּאַלְתָּ בִזְרוֹעַ עַמֶּךָ בְּנֵי-יַעֲקֹב וְיוֹסֵף סֶלָה:
יז רָאוּךָ מַיִם אֱלֹהִים רָאוּךָ מַיִם יָחִילוּ אַף יִרְגְּזוּ
תְהֹמוֹת:
יח זֹרְמוּ מַיִם עָבוֹת קוֹל נָתְנוּ שְׁחָקִים אַף-חֲצָצֶיךָ
יִתְהַלָּכוּ:

You only created the universe having us in mind. We STILL qualify for this distinction, since we do not worship idols, and therefore You will surely have pity on us.

17. Having said that the creation of the universe and the miracles performed by G'd at the time He redeemed Israel had all been on account of us, the Psalmist describes how G'd demonstrated by the miracle performed during the Exodus that G'd had created both the celestial forces as well as the forces of nature for Israel's benefit.

He commences with the first act of creation, namely the creation of water. Rashi explains on Genesis 1,1 that since the wording of the Torah there might allow the conclusion that water had preceded the creative process described there, that this is not so, but that the Torah is not concerned with reporting the chronological order of the creative process.

In other words, ***bereshit*** does NOT mean ***barishonah***, as a first step. The different descriptions in the Midrash about the meaning of the word ***shamayim*** notwithstanding, the Psalmist tells us that when G'd split the sea for the Israelites to cross on dry land, He proved that He had been the Creator of water also. Otherwise, He could not have controlled water as a natural force, and directed its behaviour.

This is the meaning of "when the waters saw You G'd, they became afraid", i.e. they knew they confronted their Creator.

It is interesting to recall Shemot Rabbah 21,2 that the waters were unwilling to split until G'd placed His right "hand" in the right hand of Moses. This is the meaning of Psalm 114,3 "the sea saw and fled". It had said to Moses "I do not agree to split for you, only for the G'd of Jacob". The waters had seen G'd's spirit hovering above them (Genesis 1,2) and had been afraid. They had been split when the dry land made its appearance. (Genesis 1,9.) Similarly, at the time when the Israelites crossed, even the ***tehomot***, the deep waters, once more became very agitated and revealed the areas of dry land between the sections of water.

18. The term ***shamayim*** comprises both outer space, a domain of the physical world such as the planets etc. commonly known as

19 *Your thunder rumbled like wheels; lightning lit up the world; the earth quaked and trembled.*
20 *Your way was through the sea, Your path, through the mighty waters; Your tracks could not be seen.*

rakia, as well as the celestial regions which are the home of the angels, disembodied spiritual beings. When the clouds shower water down on earth, the celestial regions called *shechakim*, contribute *kol*, i.e. sound. The angels are part of the *ma-asseh bereshit*, works of Creation, as we know from Bereshit Rabbah 1,3. Any disagreement concerns only the time the angels were created, i.e. whether on the second or the fifth day of the process.

Traditionally, the 3rd of the 7 *reki-im* is called *shechakim*. (Chagigah 12) This is a region in which the angels grind the manna for the *tzaddikim* of the future. it is the lowest region housing non physical beings. *Zevul* is the region in which the celestial sanctuary is situated. Anything above that is not called *shamayim*, but *shemey hashamayim*.

Asaph wants to demonstrate G'd's complete mastery of all these regions, i.e. *eretz, shamayim* and *shemey hashamayim*, and how this was demonstrated during the plagues and the miracles performed by G'd in Egypt.

Since the first item created was water, to demonstrate that the foundation of the universe is G'd's loving kindness, Asaph verifies this in the previous verse, describing G'd's spirit as hovering over the water, the raw material from which earth was made.

Now Asaph wants to show that on the second day the *rakia* was formed in order to separate between different categories of water. (Genesis 1,6) He does so by describing how "thick water" streamed down to earth. (Exodus 9,28) This is a description of the plague of hail. At that time the *kolot* of G'd, i.e. heavenly sounds were in evidence also.

The term *kolot elokim u-barad* in that verse indicate that this particular hail was a supernatural one, emanated from regions beyond the physical universe.

The fire described as contained within the hail which did not melt the hail during its earthward descent was not extinguished by the surrounding ice during its descent, is proof that it was of Divine origin. This applies also to the *kolot elokim*, as distinct from ordinary thunder. The sounds came from the *shechakim* the domain of the angels. G'd wanted to demonstrate that the One who had created these elements in the first place, i.e. the *rakia – esh* the fire between

יט קוֹל רַעַמְךָ בַּגַּלְגַּל הֵאִירוּ בְרָקִים תֵּבֵל רָגְזָה
וַתִּרְעַשׁ הָאָרֶץ:
כ בַּיָּם דַּרְכֶּךָ וּשְׁבִילְךָ בְּמַיִם רַבִּים וְעִקְּבוֹתֶיךָ לֹא
נוֹדָעוּ:

the "upper" waters and the "lower" waters was the One responsible for this strange phenomenon. This ties in with what we read in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer chapter 4, that on the second day the *rakia* which was created was the one above the *chayot* in the vision of Ezekiel 1,22, and that it resembled the awesome *kerach*, ice. The *chayot* are all shapes made of "fire". This was the beginning of the world of angels. The hint in the verse in Genesis 1,7 is the extra word *et*, i.e. G'd made something in addition to the *rakia*. The Psalmist refers to the angels as *chatzatzim*, i.e. strong *chitzim*, arrows. (compare Judges 5,11) G'd employs His angels like humans employ arrows. Normally, we conceive of fire as something which spreads, moves outwards. Here (Exodus 9,28) it is described as travelling in a straight line, like an arrow.

19. Some might argue that the sounds accompanying the hail emanated from outer space and not from the region of the angels, that they were in fact like ordinary thunder. The fire described in the Torah would then be merely lightning.

Such an argument is untenable since in that case the many bolts of lightning would have lit up the face of the earth seeing that thunder is always accompanied by lightning. However, when hail descends it is not accompanied by lightning. It follows that if there was no lightning, the sound could not have been ordinary thunder either, but must have originated in celestial regions. This is the argument presented by the Psalmist in our verse.

20. Shemot Rabbah 21, draws our attention to the fact that when the Torah describes Israel's crossing of the sea of reeds, it does not say (Exodus 14,21) "the sea was split", but it says "the waters were split". This teaches that the phenomenon was world wide, and that wherever there was a body of water it lost its molecular cohesion at that time. We need to understand why it was not deemed good enough to merely split the sea at the time in order for the Israelites to cross it and the Egyptians to drown in it.

The first reason that comes to mind is that G'd wanted all of mankind to know all about this miracle. The second reason may be something we explained in our commentary on the Torah, namely to point out Pharaoh's and his general's foolishness in not realizing that

21*You led Your people like a flock in the care of Moses and Aaron.*

78 *A* maskil *of Asaph.*
Give ear, my people, to my teaching, turn your ear to what I say.
2*I will expound a theme, hold forth on the lessons of the past,* 3*things we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.*
4*We will not withhold them from their children, telling the coming generation the praises of the LORD and His might, and the wonders He performed.*

if G'd had worked this miracle, He had certainly not worked it for the benefit of the Egyptians. He had done it for the benefit of the Jews who had been the beneficiaries of all the previous miracles.

G'd however, had misled Pharaoh by making an East wind blow all night long preceding the splitting of the sea. (Exodus 14,21) Pharaoh therefore thought that the phenomenon was natural, not miraculous. This could have led to similar conclusions on the part of Israel. To prevent Israel from thinking that the occurrence had been caused by natural causes, G'd split the waters everywhere (without the East wind blowing). This alerted all the inhabitants of the earth to the fact that this phenomenon was supernatural.

Asaph may have had this reason in mind when he said *bayam darchecha* i.e. at the sea it was Your intention to make Israel pass and to mislead the Egyptians. *derech* is a wide path. In the rest of the world, You made only a narrow path, *shevil* between the many bodies of water, to show the miraculous nature of the waters splitting. *ikvotecha lo no-da-u* "Your footsteps were not recognized", i.e. the Egyptians did not realize that it had been You who had split the sea, since they thought that the East wind had done it. As a result, all of mankind knew of the miracle except for the Egyptians who were about to be drowned.

21. The reason G'd had spread the knowledge of that miracle had only been to benefit Israel, to make other nations aware of G'd's exceptional fondness of Israel. We know from Deut. 2,7, *lo chassarta davar*, you have not lacked anything, that during the crossing of the sea, G'd had provided whatever exotic fruit a person fancied of having at the time. (Tanchuma Beshalach 10)

This is what the Psalmist refers to when he says "You guided Your

כא נָחִיתָ כַצֹּאן עַמֶּךָ בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן׃

עח א מַשְׂכִּיל לְאָסָף הַאֲזִינָה עַמִּי תּוֹרָתִי הַטּוּ אָזְנְכֶם
לְאִמְרֵי-פִי׃
ב אֶפְתְּחָה בְמָשָׁל פִּי אַבִּיעָה חִידוֹת מִנִּי-קֶדֶם׃
ג אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְנוּ וַנֵּדָעֵם וַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ סִפְּרוּ-לָנוּ׃
ד לֹא נְכַחֵד מִבְּנֵיהֶם לְדוֹר אַחֲרוֹן מְסַפְּרִים תְּהִלּוֹת
יְהוָה וְעֻזּוֹ וְנִפְלְאֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה׃

people like a flock of sheep". Although they did not deserve all these luxuries, they received them through the merit of their leaders Moses and Aaron.

Recalling all this, Asaph says that he is certain that G'd will again provide leaders since Israel is no less deserving of redemption than the nation that came out of Egypt.

Psalm 78

1. Asaph admonishes Israel to accept moral instruction so that they will not be punished as had their ancestors, for all their sins described in the Torah and later until the advent of David.

The preacher speaks to the good people who are not really in need of his sermons as well as with the multitude. (who need the sermon). The good Jews who feel close to G'd may well say "what can you tell us that we do not know already, and why do we need your preaching"? Therefore, Asaph addressing these people, says, "my people, i.e. you who are on a high moral level listen to the words of the Torah, even if you do not need to be preached to. You will receive a reward for just listening."

To the multitude, who are in need of admonition and who are not turned off when reminded of what the Torah teaches, Asaph says "please incline your ear to what I have to say".

2–4. You might say that there is no point in telling you what is already written in the Torah, and that therefore it is better to tell of things not written in the Torah but which have occurred at a later time. However, Asaph says, I feel that if I were to tell you just of events that have occurred in the world as examples of behaviour to be avoided in order not to be punished, I can still not be denied the right to describe actual events that have been described in the Torah.

5He established a decree in Jacob, ordained a teaching in Israel, charging our fathers to make them known to their children,
6that a future generation might know —children yet to be born— and in turn tell their children
7that they might put their confidence in God, and not forget God's great deeds, but observe His commandments,
8and not be like their fathers, a wayward and defiant generation, a generation whose heart was inconstant, whose spirit was not true to God.
9Like the Ephraimite bowmen who played false in the day of battle, 10they did not keep God's covenant, they refused to follow His instruction;

To the argument that many others could quote from events described in the Torah, and that besides, no one would deny any of what has been documented in the Torah, so what need is there for you Asaph? To this argument Asaph responds by saying that all the others have told those stories to aggrandize G'd, not to distil their moral ethical content as is Asaph's intention. There is therefore ample justification for Asaph to cover known territory.

5. To the argument that all this too has already been recorded in the Torah as an admonition, viz. Deut. 31,19 "let this song be a witness against Israel etc.,". Asaph replies that even though Torah is an admonition to Jacob, (Israel when on a low moral level) and a teaching to Israel (when on a high moral plane), that they should learn how to act by their awareness of it, we are still obligated to preach Torah as an admonition.

When G'd had commanded our ancestors to make Torah known, that was meant for their children, i.e. the next generation, as is stated in Exodus 10,2, "so you will tell your son and your grandson how I worked miracles in Egypt", – as well as in Exodus 13,8 "you shall tell your son on that day etc." and many similar examples in Deuteronomy.

6. But THAT commandment was only to insure that even the historically most distant generations who had not witnessed any of the events related in the Torah should be kept informed of them, so as not to forget them. They should not grow up to be rebellious and stubborn like their forefathers. (verse 8)

Asaph says that he has now been inspired by the holy spirit to convey three lessons. 1) (verse 7) All future Jewish generations are

ה וַיָּקֶם עֵדוּת בְּיַעֲקֹב וְתוֹרָה שָׂם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה
אֶת-אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְהוֹדִיעָם לִבְנֵיהֶם:
ו לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דּוֹר אַחֲרוֹן בָּנִים יִוָּלֵדוּ יָקֻמוּ וִיסַפְּרוּ
לִבְנֵיהֶם:
ז וְיָשִׂימוּ בֵאלֹהִים כִּסְלָם וְלֹא יִשְׁכְּחוּ מַעַלְלֵי-אֵל
וּמִצְוֹתָיו יִנְצֹרוּ:
ח וְלֹא יִהְיוּ כַּאֲבוֹתָם דּוֹר סוֹרֵר וּמֹרֶה דּוֹר לֹא-הֵכִין
לִבּוֹ וְלֹא-נֶאֱמְנָה אֶת-אֵל רוּחוֹ:
ט בְּנֵי-אֶפְרַיִם נוֹשְׁקֵי רוֹמֵי-קֶשֶׁת הָפְכוּ בְּיוֹם קְרָב:
י לֹא שָׁמְרוּ בְּרִית אֱלֹהִים וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ מֵאֲנוּ לָלֶכֶת:

to put their trust only in G'd, and are not to rely on their own strength.

2) They are not to forget G'd's acts of loving kindness for our ancestors though they had been undeserving. By recalling such deeds, – the later generations will be encouraged to observe G'd's laws and statutes, i.e. even those commandments they are unable to rationalize; they should perform them not merely on condition to receive a reward for their performance.

8. Thirdly, they need to be told of all this so that they will not wind up as did their forefathers as a rebellious generation. Should you wonder how a whole generation can possibly become rebellious, when it is difficult even for an individual to (halachically) become a *ben sorrer u-moreh* gluttonous and rebellious, and the Talmud Sanhedrin 71 opines that there may never in fact have been a conviction of such a rebellious individual?, the Psalmist replies that the evil urge does not overcome people in a single handed frontal attack.

Rather, he chips away at a person's defences a little at a time. A generation does not become rebellious in one fell swoop. They begin by not concentrating on SERVING G'd wholeheartedly, whereas in spirit they are still totally loyal to G'd. In the next stage, the spirit is already no longer totally loyal.

9. As an example of the insidious way of the *yetzer hara*, the evil urge, look at the *beney ephrayim*. These people, instead of putting all their trust in the Lord, relied on their own military prowess. This is why they were wiped out by the Philistines when they confronted

11they forgot His deeds and the wonders that He showed them.
12He performed marvels in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, the plain of Zoan.
13He split the sea and took them through it; He made the waters stand like a wall.
14He led them with a cloud by day, and throughout the night by the light of fire.

them. (Chronicles I 7,21) Had they relied on G'd, – this would not have happened to them. (compare Shemot Rabbah 20,11)

10. Their self confidence and lack of trust in G'd's Providence caused their debacle. They had refused to await redemption at the end of 400 years as had been part of the covenant between G'd and Abraham. (see comment on Genesis 37,11 "and his father kept the matter", i.e. he realized that the 400 years would start only at the birth of Isaac, not at the time the covenant at the pieces was concluded, i.e.30 years before Isaac was born).

Anyone who argues that these *beney ephrayim* did not lack in faith but only miscalculated the date of the redemption, is reminded that they failed to heed the promise/warning that the redeemer would legitimize himself as such with the words *pakod yifkod elokim etchem* (Genesis 50,24, and Exodus 3,16)

It had been a tradition going back to the days of Joseph, and the true redeemer, i.e. Moses did indeed use these words to identify himself to the children of Israel in Exodus 3,16.

11. Concerning the second lesson, that future generations should not FORGET the acts of loving kindness performed by G'd for His undeserving people, – you may well argue that since all these acts are recorded in the Torah, how is it possible to forget them? Why do you Asaph have to tell us about them?

Asaph replies that the Torah itself is witness that the VERY generation which had experienced – not just heard about – G'd's miracles, had conveniently forgotten what G'd had shown to them. If people could forget what they themselves had seen, how much more so later generations who had NEVER SEEN these miracles! The reason Asaph refers to *alilot* as being also *nifla-ot* at the same time is that each miracle had also produced a side effect.

For instance, the plague of blood also served to enrich the Israelites, since the Egyptians in order to have some water to drink, bought it from the Jews. Similar side effects occurred during all the other plagues.

יא וַיִּשְׁכְּחוּ עֲלִילוֹתָיו וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר הֶרְאָם:
יב נֶגֶד אֲבוֹתָם עָשָׂה פֶלֶא בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׂדֵה-צֹעַן:
יג בָּקַע יָם וַיַּעֲבִירֵם וַיַּצֶּב-מַיִם כְּמוֹ-נֵד:
יד וַיַּנְחֵם בֶּעָנָן יוֹמָם וְכָל-הַלַּיְלָה בְּאוֹר אֵשׁ:

12. The Talmud Sotah 11, describes that pregnant Jewish women went to the fields prior to giving birth, and when they had given birth, G'd provided subterranean teats from which the infants suckled honey and milk respectively. G'd would supervise these children grow up underground. When they had matured, these children would make their appearance in the fields, and miraculously, their respective parents would recognize them without having previously ever seen them.

This is what the Psalmist refers to when he says *neged avotam*, when coming face to face with their fathers. He performed a miracle, – in the field of Tzoan. It was as if they had witnessed the Egyptian's attempted murder of these infants when they had ploughed over the mounds of earth under which these children were growing up. Father and son seemed as familiar with each other in the field of Tzoan as if they had lived together in *mitzrayim* i.e. the urban centers of Egypt.

13. The word *va-ya-avirem*, He brought them across, should by rights have followed the words *vayatzev mayim kemo ned*, He made the waters stand upright like a wall. Our sages in Mechilta Beshalach 2,6, state concerning the words "that the waters were like a wall for them" (Exodus 14,29) that the waters were angry at Israel (do not read *chomah* but *chemah*, the letter *vav* being missing in the word *chomah*, compare the spelling in verse 22 in that chapter.)

How did Israel then manage to be saved from the waters on their left and on their right? On the right was the merit of the Torah which they would accept at Mount Sinai some 6 weeks later; on the left was the merit of their prayer. G'd had to ensure the walls of water would REMAIN standing. This is what the Psalmist hints at when he says LAST *vayatzev mayim* He made the waters remain upright.

14. The Psalmist saying *be-or eysh* in the light of the fire, instead of simply *ba-eysh* by the fire as he said *ba-anan* when referring to the day, requires analysis.

Similarly, the expression *vechol halaylah* i.e. the word *vechol* is noteworthy because that word is missing when the presence of the cloud by day is being described.

The reason may be that the pillar of fire made its appearance

15 *He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink as if from the great deep.*

before the end of the day, whereas it did not depart till after daybreak. Had it NOT stated that the objective was to provide light, *or*, I would have assumed that the presence of the fire was merely a sign of distinction for the Jewish people.

When Exodus 13,21 uses extra words such as *lalechet, le-ha-ir lahem*, to light up the way for them to go, this only confirms our view. It also means that the entire people benefited from that light, not just the section near the front of the encampment. Everyone had light wherever he walked. This is why the word *le-ha-ir* is joined to *yomam*, i.e. the pillar of fire provided daylight. The column of fire remained until there was full daylight.

Another reason for the emphasis on the word *or* may be that they did not suffer excessive heat from the proximity of the fire. They only benefited from its light. This too may have been the intent when the Torah emphasized "to light up".

15. The word *tzurim* in the plural is peculiar since it was a single rock that the Jewish people drank from. Also the use of *baka* instead of *hotzi* as in verse 17 is worth noting. This is all the more remarkable since in both instances i.e. Exodus 17,6 it says *VE-HIKITA*, i.e. on the *tzur* as well as in Numbers 20,11, where it says *vayach et hasela*, he HIT the rock. Why, if Moses' action is defined in both instances as "hitting", is the result once described as *vayevaka*, he split, and once simply as *hotzi*, brought forth?

Furthermore, why does the Psalmist compare the drinking by the Israelites in verse 15 to *tehomot*, the deep waters, whereas in verse 16 it is compared as river-like, *ka-neharot*?

Why is the term *nozlim*, i.e. dripping, flowing slowly used in verse 16, something that is not mentioned in the event described in verse 15?

We are told in Yalkut Shimoni Parshat Chukat item 764 that Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Shimon said in the name of Rabbi Yoshua ben Levi that when Moses struck the *tzur* to produce water, ALL the rocks in the desert split and produced water. Moses had gone amongst the rocks like a commissioner who supervises price fixing. All the stores close when such a commissioner approaches. Similarly, the rocks refused to disgorge water.

Once Moses hit one rock, they all opened up and water came out of them. This Midrash seems completely baffling! What do stores, price commissioners, weights and measures have to do with Moses' task of producing water? Besides who "closed the store"? Since

טו יְבַקַּע צֻרִים בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיַּשְׁקְ כִּתְהֹמוֹת רַבָּה׃

when does a barren rock have to "close shop" to prevent water emerging from it?

First we must understand why there was a need to hit the rock. If G'd wants to produce water from a rock, surely He can do so without hitting the rock first?

We know from the Zohar section 2, 183 and 184 that the desert is full of *kochot chitzoni-im*, forces beholden to Satan. It is in the nature of those forces to be avaricious, envious. Even in those parts of the desert where water is found, it is found in inadequate quantities. It had been G'd's intention to have the *sar hamidbar*, the celestial force in charge of the deserts supply water to Israel. This *sar* therefore wanted to severely limit the quantity of water to be made available to each Israelite, whereas G'd wanted the reverse. He wanted Israel to enjoy a plentiful supply of water.

The *kochot chitzoni-im* however, did not feel disposed to supply water on generous terms and they locked the water exits. Therefore, G'd, in order to break down their opposition had Moses strike the first rock with his staff, the *mateh elokim*, the staff of G'd which had previously demonstrated its mastery over the motion of water. When the Midrash says that Moses hit *harishon*, the "first" rock, the meaning is that he hit the *sar*, the one in charge. Once the resistance of the *sar* had been broken, all the rocks released an abundant supply of water, through all its conduits.

Now we understand why the Torah, i.e. G'd says in Exodus 17,6, "here I am standing on top of the rock at Chorev and when you (Moses) will STRIKE the rock, the waters will emerge from it." The Torah teaches that in order to humble the *sar*, it is necessary for G'd to take up position there. Moses does not strike plain rock, but the power in charge of the rocks, i.e. the negative forces that the rock harbours within it. The wording in the Torah supports this view of the sages in the Midrash that only one rock not *tzurim* were to be struck.

If G'd called the place where this occurred *massah u-merivah*, this is to underline the severe sin of the Jewish people who had doubted or denied G'd's Providence. As a result of this sin, Israel had caused the rocks to resist even further G'd's instructions to gush forth water, since their sin had created additional negative forces.

In this way, what had originally been one rock, i.e. *tzur* had meanwhile become *tzurim*, two rocks. In other words, there were now 2 causes for the water NOT to be forthcoming naturally. The emergence of the water then must not be attributed to the rock, but

16He brought forth streams from a rock and made them flow down like a river.
17But they went on sinning against Him, defying the Most High in the parched land.
18To test God was in their mind when they demanded food for themselves.

to G'd. It was only Moses' personal merit that weakened the effect of Israel's sin and resulted in the rock's ultimate willingness to give up its water. The staff is referred to as the one "with which you smote the river" (Exodus 17,5). You shall smite *ba-tzur* i.e. not just any rock, but "the rock", i.e. the *saro shel ye-or* which is the *saro shel mayim*, the force controlling water under normal conditions.

The force of nature controlling the waters of the river Nile is the same as the force of nature controlling the waters locked up within the rock. (*chitzon*) You Moses who have demonstrated your ability to overcome the force controlling the river Nile are also able to overcome the force controlling the *tzur*. As soon as you strike THAT force, – the rock, i.e. rocks will split apart by themselves without further effort on your part. This explains that the subject of the word *vayashk* is G'd, that it was not really the ROCK(s) which supplied the water in abundant quantities but G'd.

16. The situation was quite different when Moses struck the *sela* (Numbers 20,11) a stone which is not as hard as a *tzur*. We explained this in our commentary on Torah Parshat Beshalach (see page 344 in this editor's translation of Torah Moshe)

The sin committed at Refidim was great, i.e. the sin of not studying Torah (Petichat Eycha Rabbati 2). Therefore, that sin created a negative force as hard as a *tzur*.

At Kadesh however, the sin was minor, and created a force no harder than a *sela*. This sin did not create a *koach chitzoni*, an anti G'd oriented force. For this reason it sufficed to merely speak to the *sela*. There was no need to employ the staff of G'd which had demonstrated mastery over the *saro shel ha-yeor*. The *sela* itself was allowed to appear as if it yielded its own water, i.e. *va-yazuvu* the waters flowed. (verse 20)

The people's sin had consisted in the fact that they had been remiss in taking part in Miriam's burial, seeing that it had been Miriam's merit which had enabled them to drink water from the travelling well all these years. Compare our commentary in Parshat Chukat. (see this editor's translation of Torat Moshe page 669).

When Moses struck the *sela* instead of speaking to it, G'd was

טז וַיּוֹצֵא נוֹזְלִים מִסָּלַע וַיּוֹרֶד כַּנְּהָרוֹת מָיִם׃
יז וַיּוֹסִיפוּ עוֹד לַחֲטֹא-לוֹ לַמְרוֹת עֶלְיוֹן בַּצִּיָּה׃
יח וַיְנַסּוּ-אֵל בִּלְבָבָם לִשְׁאָל-אֹכֶל לְנַפְשָׁם׃

displeased and allowed only a trickle of water. Only when Moses struck the rock a second time, did quantities of water come forth. (compare Bamidbar Raba 19,9)

This is why the Psalmist describes that event first by saying *vayotzi nozlim*, (our verse) whereas he says *vayored ka-neharot mayim*, about the quantities of waters emerging after Moses had struck that rock a second time. This shows that the ONLY reason that a lot of water did not come forth immediately was because G'd had minded the fact that Moses had not carried out His instructions precisely.

tzur is conceived of as covering the waters of the globe, i.e. the waters of *tehom*, the interior of the globe. *sela* on the other hand, is conceived of as holding back only the rivers *neharot*, not *tehom*. (compare Genesis 7,11)

17. The Psalmist says that although Israel had all this visual evidence of G'd' Personal Providence for them, they continued to be sinful and rebellious against the supreme authority – in the parched land.

Their sin consisted of saying that the very fact that G'd is *elyon*, so high, makes it unlikely that He has authority in a domain controlled by *kochot chitzonim*, natural forces that claim independence from G'd. All this was due to their forgetting G'd's works. (verse 6)

18. Having quoted examples of the first 2 moral lessons that the Psalmist is harping on, namely not to trust in their own prowess but only in G'd, and never to forget G'd's mighty deeds, the Psalmist now turns to the third lesson, not to be rebellious, something expressed in the Torah by the term *ben sorrer u-moreh*, gluttonous and defiant.

He describes Israel as inducing in themselves the desire for physical gratifications. (Numbers 11,4)

They had two desires; they wanted meat as well as sexual outlets other than their wives. However, they had not dared to ask for the latter openly. We explained this in our commentary on Torah (this editor's translation of Torat Moshe page 628/9). This is why they asked only "who will feed us meat"? They asked openly only for what their *nefesh* lusted for.

However, they also tested G'd in their heart, i.e. in matters their heart desired but which they dared not openly ask for. They made it

19They spoke against God, saying, "Can God spread a feast in the wilderness?
20True, He struck the rock and waters flowed, streams gushed forth; but can He provide bread?
Can He supply His people with meat?"
21The LORD heard and He raged; fire broke out against Jacob, anger flared up at Israel,
22because they did not put their trust in God, did not rely on His deliverance.
23So He commanded the skies above, He opened the doors of heaven

appear as if they needed meat in order to survive, i.e. *lenafsham*, not because of *ta-avah*, lust, greed. They claimed that their bodies were drying out from the diet of Mannah. (Numbers 11,6)

19. Even in what they asked for outright, they were very poorly behaved, slighted G'd. They had originally claimed that the attribute of justice, i.e. *elokim* had denied them the meat. Right afterwards they questioned G'd's ABILITY i.e. the ability of the attribute of *el* to provide meat for them even if it intended to! (Zohar,section 3,31) Because of such queries, the Psalmist had referred to that generation as "the gluttonous and defiant generation". (verse 8)

20. The depth of their wickedness becomes clear when one considers that they had witnessed G'd produce water from rocks, i.e. they had seen G'd control the laws of nature. How then could they doubt His ability to provide ordinary bread? If G'd could provide heavenly bread, would He not be able to provide ordinary bread? Would He not be able to provide meat (*she-er*) for His people, seeing the animals EXISTED already and needed only to be made ready for His people? (*yachin*)

21. Therefore, G'd heard and became angry. (*evrah*) We have explained that since G'd also hears matters in the heart though they have not been articulated, He became angry at their lust for additional sexual partners. We have explained on Numbers 11,10, why the people's behaviour was WORSE in the eyes of G'd than in the eyes of Moses. The latter only knew what the people had SAID, G'd also knew what had been left unsaid, but was in their heart. In the same way that G'd responds to pleas which have not been articulated yet, (Isaiah 65,24) because He knows what is in man's heart, so He can react to sinful thoughts if part of these thoughts have been articulated.

As a result, "fire glowed against Jacob." This was only against

יט וַיְדַבְּרוּ בֵּאלֹהִים אָמְרוּ הֲיוּכַל אֵל לַעֲרֹךְ שֻׁלְחָן
בַּמִּדְבָּר:
כ הֵן הִכָּה-צוּר וַיָּזוּבוּ מַיִם וּנְחָלִים יִשְׁטְפוּ הֲגַם-לֶחֶם
יוּכַל תֵּת אִם-יָכִין שְׁאֵר לְעַמּוֹ:
כא לָכֵן שָׁמַע יְהוָה וַיִּתְעַבָּר וְאֵשׁ נִשְּׂקָה בְיַעֲקֹב וְגַם-אַף
עָלָה בְיִשְׂרָאֵל:
כב כִּי לֹא הֶאֱמִינוּ בֵּאלֹהִים וְלֹא בָטְחוּ בִּישׁוּעָתוֹ:
כג וַיְצַו שְׁחָקִים מִמָּעַל וְדַלְתֵי שָׁמַיִם פָּתָח:

Jacob, i.e. *ha-am* the common people. The elite, i.e. *beney yisrael* suffered from G'd's anger *aph* also, since they had not learned the lesson of what had happened to the people in Numbers 11,2. We have explained all this in our commentary on Torah. (this editor's translation of Torat Moshe pages 627,8)

22. His anger was not due to the DOUBTS about His ability to feed them meat, but because they lusted for additional sexual partners who had been forbidden. If proof were needed, the fact that when they did not have faith that G'd would save them from Pharaoh at the sea, is that proof. Not only had G'd NOT become angry at them for THAT lack of faith, but had even provided Manna for them shortly thereafter.

23. He opened celestial regions, *shechakim* for them, and rained down the Manna. If we interpret the Psalmist's meaning in this way, we need not wonder why the chronologically much later happening of *mey merivah* (Numbers chapter 20) is mentioned in this hymn prior to the provision of the Manna even. (Exodus chapter 16)

Also the fact that the reference to the Manna interrupts the subject of the provision of meat (Numbers chapter 11) which is resumed in verse 27, is no longer remarkable. Let us examine the difference between *man*, – *degan hashamayim* and *lechem abirim*. What is the *tzeyda* mentioned here?

We have proven in Psalm 19 that there are a total of 7 *reki-im* and that these are NOT identical with the 7 major planets. (all that were known in earlier eras) We explained there that *shechakim*, the 3rd *rakia* is the lowest region that is celestial in nature, contains no physical creatures. It is the lowest domain in which angels are found. The angels in that region "grind" the Manna for the *tzaddikim* in the

[24]and rained manna upon them for food, giving them heavenly grain.
[25]Each man ate a hero's meal; He sent them provision in plenty.
[26]He set the east wind moving in heaven, and drove the south wind by His might.
[27]He rained meat on them like dust, winged birds like the sands of the sea,

world of the future. (also for the Jewish people in the desert at that time)

Since Manna is celestial in origin, the angels have to convert it into something physical, i.e. "clothe it", to prepare it for human consumption like ground wheat. The Psalmist therefore describes the stages of this process. First, the angels are commanded by higher authority to prepare Manna for Israel. This process is referred to as "opening the doors of heaven".

Abstracts assume physical properties as they enter the "lower" regions, such as the *rakia* containing the planets. They adjust their physical appearance in each region they traverse to that which is appropriate for that *rakia*. Finally the Manna arrives in our "lower" world.

In the region called *vilon*, i.e. the region traversed by sun moon and stars, the Manna only passed through, just like doors which serve to allow someone to pass from one room to another.

24. Not all the Manna was of equal composition. Apart from that Manna, there was also the kind of Manna which G'd caused to rain down directly, fit to eat in the form it arrived, i.e. it assumed physical properties the moment it left the region called *shechakim*. The *shamayim* became only a *ma-avar* transit region for this Manna. It did not undergo changes in composition while traversing what we commonly call *shamayim*, i.e. the *rakia* immediately above earth. It is called the *degan hashamayim* a term to be understood as parallel to *degan ha-aretz*, the grain produced by the earth, the raw material bread is made from.

25. Since there were 2 categories of Manna, the latter category is called by the Psalmist *lechem abirim*, bread which can be consumed only by highly spiritualized persons. It was *ochel ish*, only select individuals of such calibre as Moses could eat it. For other individuals, this could be provided only as *tzeydah*, i.e. it became edible only after having undergone additional preparation similar to cooking etc. in our world.

כד וַיַּמְטֵר עֲלֵיהֶם מָן לֶאֱכֹל וּדְגַן-שָׁמַיִם נָתַן לָמוֹ:
כה לֶחֶם אַבִּירִים אָכַל אִישׁ צֵידָה שָׁלַח לָהֶם לָשֹׂבַע:
כו יַסַּע קָדִים בַּשָּׁמָיִם וַיְנַהֵג בְּעֻזּוֹ תֵימָן:
כז וַיַּמְטֵר עֲלֵיהֶם כֶּעָפָר שְׁאֵר וּכְחוֹל יַמִּים עוֹף כָּנָף:

lasova. The ordinary people cannot be satiated by spiritual food as long as THAT food has not assumed physical properties. This is why *tzeydah shalach lahem lasova*, G'd sent Manna in the form of *tzeydah* for the multitude so that they could become satiated. The word *ish* in the singular is a hint that there are very few people who are on such a spiritual plane that they can absorb Manna without further treatment and still satisfy their bodily needs at the same time.

26. If *yassa kadim* refers to the motion of the quails, it makes no sense, since the quails are not of celestial origin. Besides, what does *teyman*, the South have to do with them? Also, the Psalmist would be referring to two directions, whereas in the Torah we hear only about one direction. (Numbers 11,31) Also, the Psalmist speaks about *afar* and *chol* (in verse 27) as if they were two categories of meat, i.e. *she-er* and *of kanaf*, whereas the Torah describes only one category, namely the quail.

However, Israel had asked doubtingly "is G'd able to set a table in the desert"? (verse 19)

The term *el* is well known to be related to *teyman*, south. Therefore it would be necessary for the quail to be driven by a wind from *teyman*. How then could the Torah say that the wind (or spirit) that brought the quail emanated from the attribute of *hashem*, an attribute traditionally associated with mercy? The Psalmist, having been inspired by the holy spirit describes the ARRIVAL of the quail as being from the East, *kadim*.

We must assume that the wind carried the quail from the beaches of the sea of reeds, i.e. south of the Israelites, but G'd made them make a detour so that they reappeared to arrive from the East, a direction associated with the attribute *hashem*. This is the meaning of *vayenaheg*, He guided with His *uz*, i.e. in an unnatural way. The South wind was made to appear as coming from the East. The South wind is extremely powerful, and if it were not restrained by a celestial force called *ben netz* (Gittin 31), it would destroy civilization because of its strength. When the South wind reached the encampment of the Israelites, G'd arrested it in its track.

27. He then made the *selav* descend, only on them, i.e. *aleyhem*. Since there was such a large quantity of these birds, the Psalmist

[28]making them come down inside His camp, around His dwelling-place.
[29]They ate till they were sated; He gave them what they craved.
[30]They had not yet wearied of what they craved, the food was still in their mouths
[31]when God's anger flared up at them.
He slew their sturdiest, struck down the youth of Israel.
[32]Nonetheless, they went on sinning and had no faith in His wonders.

likens them to *afar*, dust, something notable by its quantity. Once the quail had descended – since it is in the nature of feathered birds to resume their flight, – the Psalmist describes that the miracle was that they became like the sand of the sea, i.e. heavy. The difference between dust and sand is that the former is blown away easily, whereas the latter always remains on the beach.

28. Another miracle was the fact G'd had made the wind drop the quail exactly within the perimeter of the Israelites, encampment. Birds normally flee human habitations. The fact that the quail did not flee, is proof that their arrival at that place at that time was not a coincidence, but that it was G'd who had made them descend, i.e. *vayapel*. According to all this, the correct interpretation of Numbers 11,31, is "a wind blew, activated by Hashem to carry the birds from the sea(shore) (their natural habitat) heavenwards". Since there was still another wind which did not emanate from the attribute of Hashem, but was *ruach teyman*, this one guided the quail once they had risen from the sea shore.

29. When someone who has lusted after something that was inappropriate for him has satisfied his lust, has had his fill of it, he usually becomes disenchanted with it, and despises it. A prime example is the story of Amnon's rape of his half sister Tamar in Samuel II 13,15. The Psalmist describes that in this instance, despite the fact that the people kept eating from the quail day after day, they did not find it revolting. On the contrary, their lust kept increasing.

30. Because it had NOT become loathsome for them, G'd did NOT hold back His anger, but He struck them while the meat was still in their mouths. This is the meaning of *vayisbe-u me-od, veta-avatam yavi lahem.*

31. In the Torah, the parallel passage describes G'd's anger as "G'd's anger was very fierce, *charah* against the people, and G'd inflicted a very great plague upon them". This means that G'd's *aph*

כח וַיִּפֹּל בְּקֶרֶב מַחֲנֵהוּ סָבִיב לְמִשְׁכְּנוֹתָיו:
כט וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׂבְּעוּ מְאֹד וְתַאֲוָתָם יָבָא לָהֶם:
ל לֹא-זָרוּ מִתַּאֲוָתָם עוֹד אָכְלָם בְּפִיהֶם:
לא וְאַף אֱלֹהִים עָלָה בָהֶם וַיַּהֲרֹג בְּמִשְׁמַנֵּיהֶם וּבַחוּרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִכְרִיעַ:
לב בְּכָל-זֹאת חָטְאוּ-עוֹד וְלֹא הֶאֱמִינוּ בְּנִפְלְאֹתָיו:

i.e. one of the types of G'd's anger burned against the people (the whole); if it could not be abated, it would have killed the entire nation, since once given permission to destroy, G'd's agents do not distinguish between the guilty and the innocent.

It is also possible, that those who had not lusted were guilty by association, since they had not protested the conduct of their peers nor made an effort to restrain them.

Therefore, to prevent such a tragic outcome, *vayach hashem*, G'd PERSONALLY struck the guilty, in order to enable the innocent to survive.

It was better to strike the guilty with a very great plague, than to risk that the whole people would perish. The name *kivrot ha-ta-avah* therefore was given to the location by G'd, to indicate that ONLY those who had lusted had become victims of that *makkah*. (Numbers 11,34)

The Psalmist therefore points out here, that the *bachurey yisrael*, i.e. the elite who had lusted but had not translated their lust into action, *–hichri-a*, G'd only subdued, but did not kill.

32. Despite all this, they kept sinning, by testing G'd such as demanding food (Numbers 21,5), claiming they had no bread, when in fact they had the Manna. By making derogatory remarks about the Manna they angered G'd. They also did not trust G'd by insisting on the despatch of spies. This is the meaning of Numbers 14,22, that "all the men who have seen My glory and My miracles which I performed in Egypt have tested Me 10 times, and have NOT listened to My voice". They should have said that the G'd who had performed such miracles in Egypt, would certainly perform at least similar miracles in the land of Israel. (to drive out the Canaanites)

33. The slander of the Manna resulted in the snake bites. *hevel* refers to the heat of the snake bite which killed many people, (Numbers 21,6) and *behalah* is the premature death of the generation due to the sin of the spies. The entire generation was not allowed to

33*He made their days end in futility, their years in sudden death.*
34*When He struck them, they turned to Him and sought God once again.*
35*They remembered that God was their rock, God Most High, their Redeemer.*
36*Yet they deceived Him with their speech, lied to Him with their words;*
37*their hearts were inconstant toward Him; they were untrue to His covenant.*
38*But He, being merciful, forgave iniquity and would not destroy; He restrained His wrath time and again and did not give full vent to His fury;*

reach more than 60 years. (those who had been at least 20 years old at the time of the Exodus or when the spies had returned from their mission)

shenotam refers to their normal predestined life span. If someone had entered his 60th year, he would die immediately, otherwise he would not be punished for the sin. *shenotam* those who had normally years left, would die at the end of their 60th year. The *behala* of those who had entered their 60th year prior to the return of the spies would be that they would die soon after. G'd's promise of (Exodus 23,26) "I will make full the number of your days", applies only to the righteous.

Every anniversary of the return of the spies, i.e. on the night of the 9th of Av, they would dig their own graves and sleep in them. (Peticha Eycha Rabbah 33). In the morning, Moses would command them to rise. Each year 15000 would fail to rise, i.e. they were the ones who had died during the night in their graves. In this way, at the end of 40 years the entire generation had died. The ones who had dug their graves were the ones who thought that they might have passed their 59th birthday. This shows that their years were *babehalah*, subject to some confusion and panic.

Those who had survived, immediately began to worry about what would happen the next 9th of Av. It is justifiable then to describe all their years as being *be-behalah*. (According to this view, – all the over 20 year olds were viewed as having had their birthday on the 9th of Av, regardless of the true date of their birth.) The words of the Torah in Numbers 14,34 *yom lashanah*, mean that all would die on the same calendar date each year.

34. Here the Psalmist addresses the question why the people's

לג וַיְכַל-בַּהֶבֶל יְמֵיהֶם וּשְׁנוֹתָם בַּבֶּהָלָה׃
לד אִם-הַרָגָם וּדְרָשׁוּהוּ וְשָׁבוּ וְשִׁחֲרוּ-אֵל׃
לה וַיִּזְכְּרוּ כִּי-אֱלֹהִים צוּרָם וְאֵל עֶלְיוֹן גֹּאֲלָם׃
לו וַיְפַתּוּהוּ בְּפִיהֶם וּבִלְשׁוֹנָם יְכַזְּבוּ-לוֹ׃
לז וְלִבָּם לֹא-נָכוֹן עִמּוֹ וְלֹא נֶאֶמְנוּ בִּבְרִיתוֹ׃
לח וְהוּא רַחוּם יְכַפֵּר עָוֹן וְלֹא יַשְׁחִית וְהִרְבָּה לְהָשִׁיב
אַפּוֹ וְלֹא-יָעִיר כָּל-חֲמָתוֹ׃

repentance and their willingness to die battling for *eretz yisrael* (Numbers 14,40) was not acceptable. The Psalmist says that the people should first have humbled themselves and confessed their sin, and only afterwards have ascended the mountain etc. Their sudden courage did not stem from feelings of remorse, but from G'd's decree to let them live to become 60 years old.

Had G'd decreed that they would die immediately, they would no doubt have sought Him out, and pleaded with Him, and expressed sentiments of remorse, confession etc. Because G'd granted them such an extended period of time before their punishment would be carried out, they underestimated the severity of their sin.

35. They should have remembered that the reason G'd did not do so was only because G'd is their Rock, not because of any merits they possessed. They ought to have realized that redemption would come only as a result of subordination and proper repentance.

36. Instead, they paid lip service, sought to beguile Him with their mouths and deceptive tongues.

37. When they did say *chatanu*, we have sinned, (Numbers 14,40) their heart was not sincere. After all they had seen the 10 spies who had brought a negative report die immediately, i.e. "finished their lives" *behevel* as discussed previously. This ought to have inspired sincere repentance, not just empty gestures.

An alternate explanation of verse 34–37. Had G'd killed all the men above 20 years old at once, and had not granted them up to 40 years of life, the younger generation would not have needed to spend 40 years in the desert waiting for their parents to die, they would have learned their lesson and repented that they had not protested their parents' conduct when the spies returned.

Under the circumstances, that wholehearted repentance did not occur, even though, or because, they remembered that G'd was their

39*for He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breath that does not return.*
40*How often did they defy Him in the wilderness, did they grieve Him in the wasteland!*
41*Again and again they tested God, vexed the Holy One of Israel.*
42*They did not remember His strength, or the day He redeemed them from the foe;*
43*how He displayed His signs in Egypt, His wonders in the plain of Zoan.*

Protector, *tzur*. *lo milibam*, their trust in G'd was not spontaneous, but they engaged only in lip service.

38. To the question why G'd put up with the phony gestures of repentance, and did not kill the older generation off sooner, the Psalmist explains that G'd is merciful, causes atonement rather than destruction.

He held back giving vent to His anger time and again. By subjecting the errant sinners to frequent *yissurim* afflictions, such as a life of years in *behala*, panic stricken confusion, He exacts payment for the sins committed. *velo ya-ir*, He does not give full vent to His fury. G'd's mercy expresses itself in His not destroying totally, but inflicting punishments, i.e. *kapparah* in instalments.

Spending the balance of their years in *behala* was fitting punishment then. We know from Baba Kama 50, that G'd does not waive sins committed, even though He is patient, compassionate and forgiving.

Besides, the difference between G'd acting personally or an agent of His acting, is precisely that. An agent acts destructively, without discriminating between the guilty and the innocent. Not so G'd Himself. (see Baba Kama 60) On the other hand, He does not allow His *chemah* full reign though *chemah* is a weaker form of anger than *aph*. (Shemot Rabbah 41,7) *Aph* is activated by a *mashchit* destructive agent who works indiscriminately.

39. Why does G'd display such an amazing degree of mercy even when such a serious sin as this had occurred? It is because He remembers that they are after all flesh and blood. (Sanhedrin 91)

Our sages there state that when G'd judges man, the body excuses its behaviour saying that it is only flesh and a clump of dust. As soon as you remove the soul from it it would be incapable of sinning. The soul, on the other hand, argues that it has NEVER sinned, except when forced to inhabit a body. G'd replies that this is

לט וַיִּזְכֹּר כִּי-בָשָׂר הֵמָּה רוּחַ הוֹלֵךְ וְלֹא יָשׁוּב׃
מ כַּמָּה יַמְרוּהוּ בַמִּדְבָּר יַעֲצִיבוּהוּ בִּישִׁימוֹן׃
מא וַיָּשׁוּבוּ וַיְנַסּוּ אֵל וּקְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל הִתְוּוּ׃
מב לֹא-זָכְרוּ אֶת-יָדוֹ יוֹם אֲשֶׁר-פָּדָם מִנִּי-צָר׃
מג אֲשֶׁר-שָׂם בְּמִצְרַיִם אֹתוֹתָיו וּמוֹפְתָיו בִּשְׂדֵה-צֹעַן׃

all true, that each part of them individually is indeed incapable of sinning, but they sinned jointly, just like the lame and the blind individually are incapable of stealing, but when the lame acts as the eyes for the blind, they can steal as a team, and appointing them as guards over the vineyard is no insurance against robbery.

Still, G'd does recognize that the respective arguments do contain a certain element of truth, and He therefore metes out a lighter sentence than would have been called for otherwise.

40. Israel cannot claim the absence of a visible sign of G'd's Presence as the reason they have sinned, since G'd has maintained a constant visible Presence throughout the years they wandered in the desert.

41–42. Even though G'd's Presence was so clear that they could pinpoint it, (Ezekiel 9,4 or Daniel 15,2, "this is MY G'd") they did not remember His hand. The argument that a lot of time had elapsed between what happened when Israel crossed the sea (and they saw the "hand" of G'd) and the next revelation in the desert at Mount Sinai, is totally spurious. On the very day that G'd had saved them from the oppressor, they forgot Him. (compare Shemot Rabbah 24)

We are told that Reuben complained to Shimon that just as they had had to put up with slime in Egypt, now at the sea they again had to put up with slime, i.e. they had to wade through it. Israel had proved ungrateful even while G'd's miracles were in progress.

They saw how G'd had killed the *saro shel mitzrayim*, the spiritual representative of Egypt in the celestial regions, as we know from Exodus 15,30. (compare Shemot Rabbah 22,2.)

If we accept the view of the Kabbalists who describe this verse as referring to what took place in the celestial regions at the time, the miracle was even greater. (Zohar 2,52).

43. In Egypt, Israel had had visual evidence when Moses prayed outside the capital in the field, and the plagues ceased at once. Or, – the reference is to the occurrence of the plagues in the city, i.e. *ototav*, wild beasts, frogs blood etc., and His *moftav*, miracles such as hail, pestilence and locust.

44*He turned their rivers into blood; He made their waters undrinkable.*
45*He inflicted upon them swarms of insects to devour them, frogs to destroy them.*
46*He gave their crops over to grubs, their produce to locusts.*

44. The absence of *kinnim, shechin* and *choshech*, lice, boils and darkness in this register of the 10 plagues, may be because each of those had merely been the culmination of a group of plagues as categorized by Rabbi Yehudah in his famous acronym *detzach adash be-achav.* (*Haggadah shel Pesach* et al.) (compare our commentary, this editor's translation of Torat Moshe pages 288/9)

They are not mentioned since they had not been preceded by warnings, their authenticity as deliberate plagues could therefore have been questioned.

Although the killing of the first born was the last of the third group of plagues, the Psalmist mentions it here, because it was the immediate cause of the Exodus, of Pharaoh releasing Israel from bondage.

G'd, however had accomplished His purpose for that set of plagues already with the plague of darkness.

The emphasis on how the plague of blood worked is because the Egyptian sorcerers tried to imitate it. The difference between their sleight of hand and the real thing was amongst other things that their ability was restricted to the water immediately in front of them – excluding all the rivers, ponds etc. This difference had to be recorded, the Psalmist feels.

45. The Psalmist's changing the sequence of the plagues of the wild beast and the frogs respectively, needs analysis. Similarly, he lists the locust and the hail in reverse chronological order when compared with the report in the Torah.

According to our commentary on Exodus 10,2– this editor's translation of Torat Moshe page 297, – every plague contained miracles not immediately visible. Similarly, every apparent relief contained the ingredients of future disasters. For instance, we are told (Zohar 2,29) that all the waters the Egyptians drank started producing frogs in their intestines. Seeing the frogs could penetrate mosaic floors, it is amazing that they did not burst forth from the intestines of the Egyptians, a much softer material. (Shemot Rabbah 10,3)

On the other hand, the frogs caused castration of the reproductive organs of all those who had drunk water. Seeing the

מו וַיַּהַפֹּךְ לְדָם יְאֹרֵיהֶם וְנוֹזְלֵיהֶם בַּל-יִשְׁתָּיוּן׃
מה יָשַׁלַּח בָּהֶם עָרֹב וַיֹּאכְלֵם וּצְפַרְדֵּעַ וַתַּשְׁחִיתֵם׃
מו וַיִּתֵּן לֶחָסִיל יְבוּלָם וִיגִיעָם לָאַרְבֶּה׃

frogs had this potentially lethal power, – but that G'd withheld it from being used, was an additional miracle.

It is similarly remarkable that G'd saved certain crops from the hail (Exodus 9,32) and that it took additional miracles to achieve this. (Shemot Rabbah 12,6)

Besides, why would G'd extend Himself to work a miracle for those who denied Him, and He advised them to take their slaves and cattle indoors? (Exodus 9,19) Why did He not let them die? Is not mercy towards the wicked an act of cruelty? (Proverbs 12,10 in essence)

The fact is that G'd reveals miracles as much in when He smites someone, as when He does NOT smite someone. Restricting the extent of the plague is as much a miracle as producing the plague in the first place.

This is what Bereshit Rabbah 49,8, has in mind when it comments on Nachum 1,1, that in contrast to human beings, G'd is at all times in control of His anger. G'd never DOES anything that He has to regret later. G'd displayed this attribute during the 10 plagues. He did not allow the plague of the frogs full reign, nor did He allow the plague of hail to wreak all the destruction the hail was capable of.

The frogs were not allowed to kill, only *le-hashchit* i.e. to castrate. Had G'd not restrained this lethal capacity of the frogs, no Egyptian whose body had been invaded would have survived. As it was, NO Egyptian died as a result of the frogs.

Similarly, during the plague of hail, G'd prevented that hail from damaging wheat and spelt crops. Having been warned first against the deathly nature of the plague, saved all those who remained indoors and took their livestock and slaves indoors. The reason G'd did so was to enable Him to bring a total of 10 plagues on Egypt, which between them paralleled the 10 directives He had employed to create the universe.

G'd wanted Israel to witness that He was the Creator. The Psalmist refers to the plague of *arov*, wild beast in the FUTURE tense, *yeshalach*. The message is that the plague of *tzefardea*, frogs had to be restricted in some way for G'd to have justification to bring on the plague of *arov* at a subsequent stage.

46. The only reason G'd did not let the hail destroy the wheat and

47 *He killed their vines with hail, their sycamores with frost.*
48 *He gave their beasts over to hail, their cattle to lightning bolts.*
49 *He inflicted His burning anger upon them, wrath, indignation, trouble, a band of deadly messengers.*

the spelt crops was to give them to the locusts to feed on. Otherwise, the locusts would not have found anything to eat.

We explained this on Exodus 10,16 "the locust ate what the hail left over, *hishir*". The proper wording should have been what had been left over after the hail, i.e. *asher nish-ar me-habarad*. It is clear then that G'd made the hail leave something over for the use of its companion plague, the locusts.

47. The Psalmist, – as distinct from the Torah – refers to the vines and sycamores as being killed by the hail, whereas the Torah singles out only the barley and the flax. Since the ordinary reading of the Torah text suggests that the survival of the wheat and spelt crops had been due to their not yet having advanced sufficiently to be destroyed by the hail, the Psalmist singles out two examples of trees which possess abundant moisture, the sycamore's moisture being concentrated in its wide flung underground roots. DESPITE this moisture, the hail killed those trees. The survival of the wheat and spelt crop then was not natural, but a result of G'd's design. This was in order to provide something for the locust to feed on. The remarks of the Midrash Socher Tov on our verse are exceptionally beautiful. The Midrash divides the word *bachanamal* into 3 words *ba nach mol*. As soon as the hail arrived, it cut it down.

This teaches the power of the hail. If it was able to destroy the sycamore tree, it certainly could have destroyed the wheat stalks, had it been allowed to. The reason G'd acted in such a way was to allow Pharaoh to draw the faulty conclusion that it was NOT within G'd's power to destroy the wheat and spelt crops, and that only THAT was the reason those crops survived. This is what is meant in Exodus 10,2, "I have made a mockery of the Egyptians". G'd says "I have simply played with Pharaoh, since it was NOT due to My inability to finish all the crops through the hail".

48. G'd did something else in connection with the plague of hail that was atypical. He made the Egyptians lock up their beasts for safekeeping as well as their slaves. Why did He do so? Why did He not simply conceal the imminent arrival of this plague and expose MORE Egyptian cattle and livestock to it?

מו יַהֲרֹג בַּבָּרָד גַּפְנָם וְשִׁקְמוֹתָם בַּחֲנָמַל:
מח וַיַּסְגֵּר לַבָּרָד בְּעִירָם וּמִקְנֵיהֶם לָרְשָׁפִים:
מט יְשַׁלַּח-בָּם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ עֶבְרָה וָזַעַם וְצָרָה מִשְׁלַחַת
מַלְאֲכֵי רָעִים:

49. He should have poured His wrath over them by having as many as possibly die from the effects of the hail!

50. However, actually, it was G'd's way of paving a path for His anger. Our sages in Mechilta Beshalach 2,1, says "the chariots of Pharaoh and his army He flung into the sea". Where did the horses come from? Had they not been killed by the hail? However all the chariots had been harnessed to those horses whom their owners had brought indoors after having received the warning of the impending plague of hail. These were the people whom the Torah had described (Exodus 9,20) as "he who feared the word of G'd, brought his servants and livestock indoors". According to this the best Egyptians were killed at the sea. We, however, learned of this fact only afterwards, in retrospect. Why did G'd APPEAR to save those who deserved to be struck by His anger?! – In order to punish them later on the day of His wrath. This is why verse 49 is written in the future instead of in the past tense. It is to alert us that G'd reserved some victims so that His anger could be displayed at a later time. *lo chasach mi-mavets*, their temporary escape from the hail did not save them from death at the hands of G'd. In a similar fashion, G'd allowed only the Egyptian *chayot*, beasts to die through the pestilence, not their owners. The only reason G'd did not kill the first born during that plague, was to enable Him to kill them during the 10th plague, that of the general killing of the first born.

This whole question was more appropriate in the case of the plague of *dever*, pestilence, since G'd had introduced it with the words "this time I have sent all My plagues against your heart, that of your servants and that of your people... and I will smite you and your people with pestilence". (Exodus 9,14–15) This was followed by the comment that the only reason G'd had allowed Pharaoh to survive thus far had been to demonstrate all G'd's signs to him etc. Rashi deduced there that the plague of *makkat bechorot*, the slaying of the first born was equivalent to ALL the other plagues combined. This is what the Psalmist refers to in our verse when he says "He did not save them from death etc."

50He cleared a path for His anger; He did not stop short of slaying them, but gave them over to pestilence.
51He struck every first-born in Egypt, the first fruits of their vigor in the tents of Ham.
52He set His people moving like sheep, drove them like a flock in the wilderness.
53He led them in safety; they were unafraid; as for their enemies, the sea covered them.
54He brought them to His holy realm, the mountain His right hand had acquired.

51. Every time G'd limited the effect of a plague, it was in order not to forego the demonstration of His power when He struck all the first born in Egypt. There are two categories of first born, the ones called *peter rechem*, i.e. the mother's first natural born child. The other kind of *bechor* is called *reshit on*, first fruit of one's virility. The Psalmist also applies a different adjective to some of these first born, describing them as stemming from the tents of Cham.

reshit on, is the father' first born, his initial offspring, – *peter rechem*, the mother's first born.

Our sages explain that there were homes containing 10 children all of whom died, since each child corresponded to one of these two definitions. The oldest, the senior, because he was the mother's first born; the other because of the immoral conduct of the mother, she had seduced young males to sleep with her, and each pregnancy resulted from *reshit on*, of her partner at the time.

The reason that the Egyptians suffered such an enormous loss of manpower at the time was that they were *beney Cham*.

Cham their ancestor had seen his father Noach's nudity WITHIN his tent. (Genesis 9,22) Sanhedrin 70 tells us that he did not content himself with looking, but had homosexual relations with his father, or/and castrated him. As a delayed part of the penalty, G'd killed any kind of first born of the Egyptians on this occasion.

52. We have explained Exodus 14,15 "why are you crying out to Me, tell the Israelites to get moving" as meaning that G'd chided Moses for invoking prayer as if the Israelites did not have enough merit to be saved by a miracle. It was enough to just TELL them to move, and they would already acquire the merit since they had enough trust in G'd. All you Moses have to do, is to RAISE your rod and the waters will split, i.e. THEIR merit suffices. (see this editor's translation of Torat Moshe page 323)

נ יְפַלֵּס נָתִיב לְאַפּוֹ לֹא-חָשַׂךְ מִמָּוֶת נַפְשָׁם וְחַיָּתָם
לַדֶּבֶר הִסְגִּיר:
נא וַיַּךְ כָּל-בְּכוֹר בְּמִצְרָיִם רֵאשִׁית אוֹנִים בְּאָהֳלֵי-חָם:
נב וַיַּסַּע כַּצֹּאן עַמּוֹ וַיְנַהֲגֵם כָּעֵדֶר בַּמִּדְבָּר:
נג וַיַּנְחֵם לָבֶטַח וְלֹא פָחָדוּ וְאֶת-אוֹיְבֵיהֶם כִּסָּה הַיָּם:
נד וַיְבִיאֵם אֶל-גְּבוּל קָדְשׁוֹ הַר-זֶה קָנְתָה יְמִינוֹ:

The Psalmist alludes to this when he says that Israel was induced to march like sheep – at Moses' command only. As soon as Moses asked them to walk into the sea, they responded, sheep like, trusting in G'd. (compare Vayikra Rabbah 27 on the verse in Psalms 36,7. "man and beast You deliver o G'd")

If man acts trustingly, (in G'd) as sheep do, then G'd will certainly be their Saviour.

Later on in the desert, when more was required than merely marching, G'd Himself led Israel.

It is noteworthy that the vowel under the letter ***kaph*** in ka-eder is not the usual sheva i.e. ke-eder that we would have expected, but a full vowel, indicating that the reference is not just to any flock, but to a particular flock, the one of which the Psalmist had said in Psalms 23,2 "He makes me lie down in green pastures i.e. that that flock did not lack in anything.

He had led them through the sea like the flock known in the desert. They had not had to go short of any of life's comforts. Our sages in Shemot Rabbah 21,10, have enlarged on this theme.

53. One may ask why G'd's providing Israel with all these luxuries mentioned in the Midrash was so important, seeing that the whole crossing of the sea took only part of one night? The answer is that Israel, when observing how the Egyptians drowned, realized that they too had worshipped idols and they feared that G'd would exact retribution from them for that sin. Seeing how G'd pampered them even while in the process of crossing the sea, convinced them that they had nothing to fear. They reasoned if G'd had really wanted to punish them later, He would not have bothered to ply them with luxuries at the time He was busy saving them from the Egyptians. This is the meaning of ***vayanchem le-vetach***, He guided them to a feeling of security and safety.

54. Whereas the temple mount is special to G'd, i.e. ***kantah yemino***, the whole area of ***eretz yisrael*** is called ***gevul kodsho***, His holy realm.

55*He expelled nations before them, settled the tribes of Israel in their tents, alloting them their portion by the line.*
56*Yet they defiantly tested God Most High, and did not observe His decrees.*
57*They fell away, disloyal like their fathers; they played false like a treacherous bow.*
58*They vexed Him with their high places; they incensed Him with their idols.*
59*God heard it and was enraged; He utterly rejected Israel.*
60*He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent He had set among men.*
61*He let His might go into captivity, His glory into the hands of the foe.*

55. Once Israel had reached *eretz yisrael*, – G'd Himself took over the task of expelling nations on their account, and settled Israel in those nations' former abodes. The word *vayegaresh* refers specifically to the tribe Girgashi who emigrated to a distant land, whereas the other Canaanite nations were killed inside the land of Israel, i.e. *be-chevel nachalah*.

G'd settled Israel in the former dwellings of all the 7 tribes.

56. The Psalmist describes a gradual departure by Israel from G'd's laws and traditions. First, they tested G'd's *hashgachah*, Personal Providence, claiming that He was *elyon*, so high that He did not concern Himself with happenings on earth. Afterwards, they rebelled, – but kept the *mitzvot* except the *eydot* the ones testifying to His Personal Providence, supervision of their collective and individual fates.

57. Then they fell back and became disloyal, just like their ancestors, imitating the behaviour of Israel after the Exodus.

What irks the Psalmist is that their relapse extended not only to the last generation, the one who had inherited the land and been found worthy, i.e. their *avotam* actual fathers, but that when they became disloyal they acted like the *yotzey mitzrayim*, the generation of the Exodus.

When an archer takes aim and wishes to deceive the target of his bow, he feigns aiming at a different target, reversing himself at the last possible moment. This is *keshet mirmah*. The Jewish people, having finally achieved spiritual maturity when they occupied *eretz*

נה וַיְגָרֶשׁ מִפְּנֵיהֶם גּוֹיִם וַיַּפִּילֵם בְּחֶבֶל נַחֲלָה וַיַּשְׁכֵּן
בְּאָהֳלֵיהֶם שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
נו וַיְנַסּוּ וַיַּמְרוּ אֶת-אֱלֹהִים עֶלְיוֹן וְעֵדוֹתָיו לֹא שָׁמָרוּ:
נז וַיִּסֹּגוּ וַיִּבְגְּדוּ כַּאֲבוֹתָם נֶהְפְּכוּ כְּקֶשֶׁת רְמִיָּה:
נח וַיַּכְעִיסוּהוּ בְּבָמוֹתָם וּבִפְסִילֵיהֶם יַקְנִיאוּהוּ:
נט שָׁמַע אֱלֹהִים וַיִּתְעַבָּר וַיִּמְאַס מְאֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:
ס וַיִּטֹּשׁ מִשְׁכַּן שִׁלוֹ אֹהֶל שִׁכֵּן בָּאָדָם:
סא וַיִּתֵּן לַשִּׁבְי עֻזּוֹ וְתִפְאַרְתּוֹ בְּיַד-צָר:

yisrael under Joshua, unfortunately reversed course like a deceitful bow.

58. First they angered G'd by erecting private altars – on which they sacrificed exclusively to Him. At a later stage they made Him jealous by making images. Seeing that they worshipped utterly useless things, aroused G'd's jealousy.

59. When the *Shechinah* which resided in Shiloh became aware of all this, G'd became angry and despised Israel greatly.

60. As a result He abandoned the tabernacle in Shiloh, the tent He had made a residence amongst man. Should someone ask why G'd would abandon and punish the sanctuary which had not sinned after all, because the people had sinned? The Psalmist answers that we should not think that G'd arranges to take up residence within a man made structure, such as a sanctuary. G'd wants to take up residence, i.e. feel at hom *ba-adam*, within man. We explained this on Exodus 25,8 "I will dwell within THEM". (not within it)

G'd does not make His residence in a tent, a structure of stone etc. but WITHIN people, if they are worthy of His Presence. When they abandon Him, He abandons the temple, since even when they performed His will, He had NEVER made the mere symbol of His Presence, i.e. the temple, His actual home.

61. He allowed His holy ark to go into captivity, i.e. *uzo*, that which represents His strength! The reason He allowed this was *vetifarto beyad tzor*, the enemy of Israel realized the sanctity of the holy ark and treated it accordingly. It symbolized for them the Power which had subdued Egypt, sent the 10 plagues etc. as is stated in Samuel I 4,8.

This was in contrast to when the holy ark had resided within Israel. On the contrary, Israel had even made G'd jealous by making idols while the holy ark was in its midst.

62*He gave His people over to the sword; He was enraged at His very own.*
63*Fire consumed their young men, and their maidens remained unwed.*
64*Their priests fell by the sword, and their widows could not weep.*
65*The Lord awoke as from sleep, like a warrior shaking off wine.*
66*He beat back His foes, dealing them lasting disgrace.*
67*He rejected the clan of Joseph; He did not choose the tribe of Ephraim.*
68*He did choose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which He loved.*
69*He built His Sanctuary like the heavens, like the earth that He established forever.*

62–63. The people's troubles became great. G'd delivered them to the sword. (30000 fell in the battle with the Philistines)

64. Also Chofni and Pinchas the two sons of Eli the High Priest fell in the war. (Samuel I 4,11) Still, – their widows wept for the holy ark rather than for the loss of their husbands.

65. Therefore G'd's mercy was stirred, i.e. "my Master who appeared to have been asleep – is awake". While the *Shechinah* had noticed that ONLY the gentiles were awed by Him, He had related to His people as if asleep. The Psalmist does not describe the usual sequence of "going to sleep and awakening", but refers to an "awakening" and only then mentions that it had been preceded by a sleep like stance. This is a hint that the merit of Pinchas' widow sufficed ONLY to cause a partial "awakening" of G'd. It did not suffice to inspire action by G'd against Israel's enemies. It was like an awakening from a wine induced sleep.

66. Therefore, though G'd inflicted plagues on the Philistines – (Samuel I chapter 5), He did not kill them, only shamed them in order to show that they had been wrong in considering Him asleep.

67. Instead of despising all of Israel, G'd now concentrated His disgust on the tribe of Joseph, did not choose the tribe of Ephrayim the one whose territory formerly hosted the tabernacle and the holy ark. (Shiloh) The reason the Psalmist's emphasis is on the people rather than on the locations, confirms what we have said earlier that G'd wants to make His home within man if he is worthy.

Since the tribe of Ephrayim was not spiritually fit at that time, the

סב וַיִּסְגֹּר לַחֶרֶב עַמּוֹ וּבְנַחֲלָתוֹ הִתְעַבָּר׃
סג בַּחוּרָיו אָכְלָה-אֵשׁ וּבְתוּלֹתָיו לֹא הוּלָלוּ׃
סד כֹּהֲנָיו בַּחֶרֶב נָפָלוּ וְאַלְמְנֹתָיו לֹא תִבְכֶּינָה׃
סה וַיִּקַץ כְּיָשֵׁן אֲדֹנָי כְּגִבּוֹר מִתְרוֹנֵן מִיָּיִן׃
סו וַיַּךְ צָרָיו אָחוֹר חֶרְפַּת עוֹלָם נָתַן לָמוֹ׃
סז וַיִּמְאַס בְּאֹהֶל יוֹסֵף וּבְשֵׁבֶט אֶפְרַיִם לֹא בָחָר׃
סח וַיִּבְחַר אֶת-שֵׁבֶט יְהוּדָה אֶת-הַר צִיּוֹן אֲשֶׁר אָהֵב׃
סט וַיִּבֶן כְּמוֹ-רָמִים מִקְדָּשׁוֹ כְּאֶרֶץ יְסָדָהּ לְעוֹלָם׃

holy ark could not return to Shiloh as a symbol of G'd feeling at home within the hearts of the members of that tribe.

68. The missing letter *vav* in *et tziyon* is peculiar. It makes it appear as if the Psalmist equates the tribe of Yehudah i.e. the people with Mount Zion! Zion, after all, is the name of the city, not a person or people!

However, since Zion is part of the territory of the tribe of Yehudah, the Psalmist says that from then on G'd chose the tribal territory of Yehudah, i.e. that the merit of Yehudah was joined with the merit of Zion which G'd had always loved.

Since creation, the *Shechinah* had prevailed there. (It had been the first part of earth created, therefore more holy) The word *et tziyon* is to be understood as in Genesis 6,13 "I will destroy them TOGETHER WITH the earth".

69. To understand the meaning of this verse, we first have to explain the difference between the term *mishkan*, tabernacle as residence and the term *mikdosh* sanctuary as residence.

We know that the Divine Presence *Shechinah* does not depend on a structure in our "lower" world, but on the sanctuary in the celestial regions. The temple on earth is located opposite the sanctuary in the celestial regions. (compare Tanchuma Mishpatim 18)

All the details that are part of the temple in our world, have their counterparts in the celestial sanctuary. Because the temple in our world is constructed as a replica of the celestial sanctuary, G'd endows it with all the outpourings of His generosity, and the Divine Presence within it resembles the Divine Presence within the celestial sanctuary. It remains in our world permanently, just as it remains in the celestial regions forever.

This is why even when the temple was destroyed, the *Shechinah*

70He chose David, His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds.
71He brought him from minding the nursing ewes to tend His people Jacob, Israel, His very own.
72He tended them with blameless heart; with skillful hands he led them.

79 *A psalm of Asaph.*
O God, heathens have entered Your domain, defiled Your holy temple, and turned Jerusalem into ruins.

did not depart from the Western wall. (Shemot Rabbah 2,2). The tabernacle however, was not located opposite the celestial sanctuary, it is only opposite a heavenly tabernacle, a concept we find in Bamidbar Rabbah 12,12. This tabernacle in heaven is known as *mishkan hana-ar*, the junior tabernacle, it is in use during periods of exile. We know this from Exodus 25,9 "the blueprint of THE tabernacle", the letter *heh* in front of *mishkan* indicating that a previously known *mishkan* is referred to. This is the *mishkan* in the celestial regions. The words *ve-cheyn ta-assu*, i.e. "and you shall do likewise", is the instruction to construct a tabernacle on earth that corresponds to the model of the one in celestial regions.

The *mikdash* in the heavens is obviously different from that which is described as the "junior tabernacle of the heavens".

The Presence of the *Shechinah* in the tabernacle is of a "lower" spiritual intensity. When the tabernacle on earth is destroyed, the degree of the *Shechinah* which it contained while standing, departs. This is unlike the higher degree of the *Shechinah* that had been manifest in the actual *mikdash*, temple.

This is why even if the temple structure is destroyed, a remnant of that spiritual Presence never departs from the Western wall.

The Psalmist says "He despised the tent of Joseph", referring to His tabernacle. He goes on to say "He chose *har tziyon*. This means that G'd decided to upgrade the tabernacle on earth, to the status of *mikdosh*.

Such upgrading would confer two advantages on Israel when compared with the previous state of affairs.

Firstly, He built *kemo ramim*, like the temple in the celestial regions, a reference to the *romemut*, the most majestic spiritual level extant in the region called *zevul*. This *mikdosh* had its counterpart in the

ע וַיִּבְחַר בְּדָוִד עַבְדּוֹ וַיִּקָּחֵהוּ מִמִּכְלְאֹת צֹאן:
עא מֵאַחַר עָלוֹת הֱבִיאוֹ לִרְעוֹת בְּיַעֲקֹב עַמּוֹ וּבְיִשְׂרָאֵל נַחֲלָתוֹ:
עב וַיִּרְעֵם כְּתֹם לְבָבוֹ וּבִתְבוּנוֹת כַּפָּיו יַנְחֵם:

עט

א מִזְמוֹר לְאָסָף אֱלֹהִים בָּאוּ גוֹיִם בְּנַחֲלָתֶךָ טִמְּאוּ אֶת-הֵיכַל קָדְשֶׁךָ שָׂמוּ אֶת-יְרוּשָׁלַם לְעִיִּים:

olam ha-atzilut, a higher celestial region, unlike that in which the *mishkan hana-ar* the junior tabernacle is located.

Secondly, it is founded like earth itself, i.e. the foundation of earth, *yessodah leolam*, it last forever. Similarly, the foundations of this *bet hamikdosh*. This means that the *Shechinah* never totally departs from that location.

70. To the question that since the temple would be destroyed twice due to Israel's sins, how can we speak about an everlasting temple??, and what good is the fact that the *Shechinah*'s Presence has not withdrawn from the Western wall when our sins prevent the rebuilding of the temple? Asaph replies by saying that G'd has chosen David. This means that surely G'd did not select David as king if He did not have great plans for him to be leader in Israel.

He would not have a mere shepherd boy become king. He could have found candidates who came from aristocratic families used to exert power and influence!

71. He took David from nursing lactating ewes. G'd brought him from the pastures since He knew only one person was fit to become the true leader at that time as well as in the Messianic era to come, and that that person was David.

72. This proved to have been the correct decision, since he shepherded them with a blameless heart and his hands acted with intelligence.

Psalm 79

1. Members of the great Assembly who restored the use of G'd's attributes to its former norms (i.e. they reintroduced describing G'd as "the mighty and awe-inspiring". Yuma 69) advanced a reason for the overriding changes which had been made by Jeremiah and Daniel, respectively.

They said that the very fact that G'd restrains His impulse to immediately punish those who prance blasphemously on the mountain that used to be crowned by the holy temple, is evidence of His *gevurah*, mightiness. Remaining in control of one's emotions is true *gevurah*. Being governed by one's emotions is not. G'd's restraint lasted so long that the Psalmist himself felt impelled to shout impatiently in verses 5–6 "how long o G'd will You do so? Will You not finally pour out Your anger over these nations?

It is strange that the Psalmist needs to remind us that the gentiles arrived in the land of Israel, i.e. *benachalatecha*, seeing that he has already described them as having defiled it and having turned Jerusalem into ruins. In what way does the statement *ba-u goyim benachalatecha* add anything? Also, seeing that the conquerors set all the holy sites throughout the land including the temple to the torch, why does Asaph single out the fact that they defiled the sanctuary?

We find in Pessikta Rabbati chapter 27 that G'd did not allow the Babylonians to burn the first temple, – since it was holier than the second temple –, but arranged for an angel to do so, and that this is the meaning of Jeremiah 20,7 "You G'd have seduced me and I allowed myself to be seduced".

When the end of Jerusalem drew near, G'd had told Jeremiah to go to Anatot and to redeem the field of his uncle Chanamel. At that time, Jeremiah had believed that this very request indicated that G'd had relented from His decision to destroy Jerusalem. (Jeremiah chapter 32)

As soon as Jeremiah had left Jerusalem on his way to Anatot, an angel descended from heaven, placed his feet on the walls of Jerusalem and breached the wall. He called out to the enemy to enter, since the Lord had abandoned His house. The angel invited the enemy to plunder and cause destruction. The Babylonians did so and destroyed the "vineyard" since their "guard" had abandoned it.

The reason the guard, i.e. G'd had abandoned it prior to the entry of the Babylonians was so that the Babylonians could not claim to have subdued the city, seeing they had entered a city that had already been abandoned. When the Babylonians entered, they erected a high platform on the temple Mount, and provided a seat for their king on the centre of that platform, to hold a council with his advisors. They debated how to go about burning down the temple. Before they had come to a decision, they raised their eyes and observed 4 angels descend, each holding a torch which he placed on the 4 corners of the temple, and proceeded to burn it down.

When Jeremiah returned from Anatot, when on his way to

Jerusalem, he saw smoke rise from the temple and was hopeful that Israel had repented its sins and that the smoke came from their offerings, since the smoke from the incense always rose in a straight column.

By the time he reached the city wall, he saw that he had been deceived. So far the Midrash in Pessikta. At any rate, we see from it that at the time the first temple was destroyed, G'd permitted the enemy only "to come to Your inheritance", to debate how to burn it.

Not in all the 4 exiles the Jewish people experienced, were our enemies permitted to physically destroy and defile the holy temple; only during 3 of these exiles.

Nebuchadnezzar as well as the Greeks entered the holy of holies and desecrated holy vessels. Rome did not only lay waste the temple, but also the whole of Jerusalem. They had said *aru aru ad ha-yessod*, strip her strip her down to its foundations.

During the exile of the Persians/Medes (Haman) however, the temple had not yet been rebuilt, and though Ahasverus interrupted the process of rebuilding it, – failing to do something positive is not as serious a crime as destroying something which already exists.

Asaph addresses himself to the three occasions when the temple had actually been defiled, and he acknowledges that not in each case did Jerusalem/temple suffer the full extent of the enemy's fury.

The first time when Jerusalem was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, the enemy did not have total control. G'd did not allow him to carry out all his designs, i.e. to burn the temple. All he could do was *ba-u goyim nachalatecha*. This proves that G'd had not despised the SITE; it always remains *nachalatecha*, Your inheritance, share, that the *Shechinah* never departed completely.

Similarly, during the attack on Judaism under the Greeks, though they defiled Your temple, they did not destroy it. It was still called *har kodshecha*, the mountain of Your holiness. Even when the temple is gone, the holiness of the mountain endures. We know this from Leviticus 26,31, *vahashimoti et mikdasheychem*, I will lay waste your temples. Had the Torah written the reverse order namely, *mikdashchem eshomem*, I would have concluded that as soon as it is destroyed, its sanctity, or rather the sanctity of its site, ceases.

The same is true in stronger measure when the Greeks had defiled the temple without actually destroying it. The Hasmoneans had cleansed and rededicated it shortly afterwards. The Psalmist refers to that episode with the words *tim-u et heychal kodshecha*. Even on the third occasion, when the Romans (Edom) destroyed Jerusalem and had complete control, they only destroyed the foundations of Jerusalem, not the foundations of the temple, i.e.

[2]They have left Your servant's corpses as food for the fowl of heaven, and the flesh of Your faithful for the wild beasts.
[3]Their blood was shed like water around Jerusalem, with none to bury them.
[4]We have become the butt of our neighbors, the scorn and derision of those around us.

samu et yerushalayim le-iyim.

In respect of that event, the Psalmist in Psalm 137,7 proclaims "remember o G'd against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem – how they called out to strip her to its very foundations". They called to strip her to its foundations, but did not get to execute this plan against the temple. Whatever David had built, was never destroyed by an enemy.

However, the greatest disaster, something concerning which Asaph cannot compose a hymn expressing satisfaction that things had not been as bad as they could have been, – was that they handed over the dead bodies of Your servants to the birds of prey of the sky, and the flesh of Your pious ones to the wild beasts! Surely, this rates an elegy not a Psalm!

Since our sages explained that Asaph sang to G'd who had unleashed His anger at stone and wood, sparing many of the people, – we must question that this would be a justifiable song if through pouring out His anger against wood and stone, all the Jewish people had indeed been saved, or at least their elite. How could he sing, knowing that ***chassidecha*** and ***avadecha***, Your pious ones and Your servants were not only murdered but did not even receive a burial?

2. The Talmud Sanhedrin 47 discusses this verse, and concludes that the words ***avadecha*** and ***chassidecha*** under discussion are the remains of people who during their lifetime had been very far from pious or righteous even. In His mercy, G'd made them die miserable deaths and denied them the dignity of a decent burial. Thereby He enabled them to atone for their sins. As a result, they can be described as ***avadecha*** and ***chassidecha*** Your servants and Your pious ones, posthumously. When viewed in this light, we understand Asaph's acknowledging such deaths in the form of a Psalm.

The reference to these ***chassidim*** and ***avadim*** as carcass, ***nevaylah***, and mere "flesh", ***bassar***, caused the rabbis in the Talmud to interpret our verse in this way. Otherwise, the term ***nevaylah*** is most unseemly for a person who had lived a life as a servant of the Lord.

We find a similar approach to Isaiah 26,19 "your dead will come

ב נָתְנוּ אֶת-נִבְלַת עֲבָדֶיךָ מַאֲכָל לְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּשַׂר
חֲסִידֶיךָ לְחַיְתוֹ-אָרֶץ:
ג שָׁפְכוּ דָמָם כַּמַּיִם סְבִיבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָם וְאֵין קוֹבֵר:
ד הָיִינוּ חֶרְפָּה לִשְׁכֵנֵינוּ לַעַג וָקֶלֶס לִסְבִיבוֹתֵינוּ:

alive, my carcass will arise *nevaylati"* etc. Our sages say that *meytecha*, your dead, refers to the people who died inside *eretz yisrael*, whereas *nevaylati*, my carcass refers to people who died in the diaspora. (Ketuvot 111)

Those who died, – even at the destruction of the temple in Israel, – prior to having confessed their sins, are referred to AT THAT TIME as *nevaylah*, a carcass.

Our Psalmist continues in verse 3 "they shed their blood like water etc." Why does the Psalmist mention the shedding of blood only AFTER the victims had already been described as carcasses? Besides, since they had already been killed, why does the Psalmist have to tell us *ve-eyn kover*, there is no one to bury them! Surely the dead cannot bury the dead!

Ordinarily, we are entitled to understand these verses along the lines of Leviticus 26,25 "I will send pestilence amongst you, and you will be delivered into the hands of your enemies". This means that BECAUSE of the pestilence you will be delivered into the hands of your enemies. Only because you die, – will you become victims. Since within Jerusalem it is forbidden to leave a body unburied overnight, the victims of the pestilence will have to be placed outside the city wall. Once there, the enemy would kill them. Our verse can be understood in a similar vein.

3. To the question why they did not take their dead outside the city to bury them there, instead of leaving them for the birds of prey and the animals to devour, the Psalmist answers that blood was spilled like water outside Jerusalem. Midrash Tehillim on our verse explains that they did NOT treat the blood of the Jewish inhabitants even with the dignity accorded to *tzevi ve-ayal*, the deer and gazelle, whose lifeblood is covered with earth. (Leviticus 17,13)

The words *eyn kover*, refer to the blood, – not to the flesh and bones. Covering a bird's blood with earth is the equivalent of burial of the body of a member of a higher category of living creature.

4. In the eyes of our neighbors we were not even ridiculed, being considered a disgrace; in the eyes of our more distantly located surroundings, we were the butt of scorn and derision. A similar division is evident in verse 6, when the Psalmist calls on G'd to pour

5How long, O LORD, will You be angry forever, will Your indignation blaze like fire?
6Pour out Your fury on the nations that do not know You, upon the kingdoms that do not invoke Your name,
7for they have devoured Jacob and desolated his home.
8Do not hold our former iniquities against us; let Your compassion come swiftly toward us, for we have sunk very low.

out His wrath on 1) *goyim* and 2) *mamlachot*, kingdoms. Similarly, the Psalmist distinguishes between *achal et ya-akov* those who consume (singular) Jacob, and those who have laid waste *heyshamu* (plural) his residence. It is not clear to whom or what the word *naveyhu*, his residence refers, since the word *naveh* is usually the term used for the temple, not for Jacob's residence.

If the word *naveyhu* refers to G'd, i.e. His temple, the Psalmist should have said *navecha* Your residence, not "His residence", since the call *shefoch*, pour out, is in direct language.

We have however, a similar switch from direct language to indirect language in Proverbs 24,17–18, where the paragraph reads "when your enemy falls, do not rejoice, when he stumbles, let your heart not be glad so that G'd will not see it and it will be displeasing in His eyes, and He will turn away His anger from him." Here, our enemies who are rejoicing over our downfall will become the cause for G'd's anger turning away from us. This is why even this fact gives rise to a Psalm in Asaph's mind.

5. Asaph has reason then to demand from G'd that He should stop being angry at the Jewish people, since we have become the cause of ridicule and laughter to our *sevivah* surroundings, i.e. to those round about us. The same anger that had been directed at us, should now be directed against our enemies like fire. You G'd should be jealous of the frivolous joy they display at our misfortune.

6. Pour Your anger out at our neighbors for they have not become aware that our misfortune is YOUR doing, and against the kingdoms (Babylonia and Rome who have laid waste the temple) who did not proclaim that when they destroyed the temple they did so at Your behest, in Your name. They were not concerned with honouring Your name. They did not claim that they oppressed us because we had angered You Lord.

7. What they should have proclaimed was that YOUR NAME had consumed Jacob, (it had not been THEIR doing) since G'd is an *ish milchamah*,a man of war. (Exodus 15,3) Instead, they took full credit

ה עַד-מָה יְהוָה תֶּאֱנַף לָנֶצַח תִּבְעַר כְּמוֹ-אֵשׁ קִנְאָתֶךָ:
ו שְׁפֹךְ חֲמָתְךָ אֶל-הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יְדָעוּךָ וְעַל-
מַמְלָכוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁמְךָ לֹא קָרָאוּ:
ז כִּי אָכַל אֶת-יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת-נָוֵהוּ הֵשַׁמּוּ:
ח אַל תִּזְכָּר-לָנוּ עֲוֹנֹת רִאשֹׁנִים מַהֵר יְקַדְּמוּנוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ
כִּי דַלּוֹנוּ מְאֹד:

for their victory, ascribing it to their own prowess. Not only did they NOT give credit to G'd to whom it was due, but ***et navehu heshamu***, they laid waste His residence, i.e. His name, the name of the very One who had enabled them to be victorious!

G'd's temple bears HIS name, as we know from Deuteronomy 16,6, "to the place where He allows His name to dwell" (the temple)

Or, one would argue that all Rome did was to act as G'd's whip against Israel as had already been predicted in Genesis 27,20, see Bereshit Rabbah 67,7, namely that Esau is commanded by Isaac to punish Jacob's descendants if the latter deviate from G'd's laws.

The Psalmist argues that this could be a justification for only a small part of the torture inflicted by Rome on the Jewish people. It certainly does not excuse destroying the temple of G'd. It also does not excuse ***achal***, i.e. consuming Jacob.

Tanchuma Vayechi 6, states that after having accepted the gifts from his brother Jacob, Esau later took all of Jacob's possessions in return for waiving his claim to burial in the cave of Machpelah. This is based on Genesis 50,5, when Jacob claims the right to burial there by saying "in my grave which I have dug for myself in the land of Canaan". Had Jacob been a gravedigger then? He had made a pile *keri* of all his possessions and offered Esau the choice of burial in the cave of Machpelah or that heap. Esau chose the latter. This is why the Psalmist refers to Edom-Rome in the singular, i.e. Esau himself ***achal*** consumed Jacob. (his possessions) Afterwards, Esau's descendants continued in that vein. They SLANDERED ***navehu***, i.e. His name and reputation. The Psalmist did not need to identify further whose ***naveh*** he was talking about, but could simply say ***navehu***, "His ***naveh***", i.e. the One whose name was associated with Jacob.

8. The first temple was destroyed because of idol worship, bloodshed and immorality, whereas the second temple was destroyed because of character failures such as causeless hatred. The Psalmist asks that G'd not remember the sins leading to the

9Help us, O God, our deliverer, for the sake of the glory of Your name.
Save us and forgive our sin, for the sake of Your name.
Let the nations not say, "Where is their God?"
10Before our eyes let it be known among the nations that You avenge the spilled blood of Your servants.
11Let the groans of the prisoners reach You; reprieve those condemned to death, as befits Your great strength.
12Pay back our neighbors sevenfold for the abuse they have flung at You, O LORD.

destruction of the first temple but only those that led to the destruction of the second temple.

He asks for G'd's mercy at an early date seeing that we are so impoverished and the fact that this very poverty has robbed us of our former virtues. There is an implied hint that ongoing poverty will make it hard to preserve those virtues.

9. If we were to ask that You SAVE us for Your name's sake, You would say that since we have desecrated Your name, "how can I have mercy on you"? Therefore, the Psalmist asks *ozreynu*, help us correct our sins, the ones connected with desecrating Your name, – and after that You will be able to forgive us our other sins for Your name's sake.

10. Why would the gentile nations – when they observe that we martyr ourselves for Your name without being saved – be able to say "where IS their G'd?" Only by our being saved, can the knowledge that G'd avenges the blood of His servants become known to them! When they see that You save us from being killed as martyrs for Your name, that You have not abandoned us inasmuch as we are Your servants, and that retribution is still in store for those who have shed the blood of Your servants, they will know where our G'd is.

11. To G'd's question why Israel should not die seeing they have desecrated His name, since only in that manner could they ever hope to achieve atonement, the Psalmist answers "let the groans of the prisoner reach You", i.e. let the fact that they NOW sanctify Your name in public wipe out the former sin of having desecrated it.

In other words, let the suffering experienced prior to a martyr's death be equivalent to the death penalty they had been guilty of. Even if they had been *ben temutah*, *hoter*, grant reprieve!

12. Concerning the disgrace and torture our neighbors have subjected us to, we are satisfied if You give us a reprieve for the death penalty we have been guilty of prior to that. But concerning

ט עָזְרֵנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ עַל-דְּבַר כְּבוֹד-שְׁמֶךָ וְהַצִּילֵנוּ
וְכַפֵּר עַל-חַטֹּאתֵינוּ לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ׃
י לָמָּה יֹאמְרוּ הַגּוֹיִם אַיֵּה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם יִוָּדַע בַּגּוֹיִם
לְעֵינֵינוּ נִקְמַת דַּם-עֲבָדֶיךָ הַשָּׁפוּךְ׃
יא תָּבוֹא לְפָנֶיךָ אֶנְקַת אָסִיר כְּגֹדֶל זְרוֹעֲךָ הוֹתֵר בְּנֵי
תְמוּתָה׃
יב וְהָשֵׁב לִשְׁכֵנֵינוּ שִׁבְעָתַיִם אֶל-חֵיקָם חֶרְפָּתָם אֲשֶׁר
חֵרְפוּךָ אֲדֹנָי׃

the shame and disgrace they have heaped upon YOU G'd, we ask that they be repaid sevenfold. When analysing this verse, the word *el cheykam* seems peculiar; what does this have to do with paying them back seven fold? Besides, how can they be paid back 7 times their due? It is not G'd's way to punish someone over and aboye what he deserves! Certainly not more than twice the value of the sin! Also, the word *cherpatam*, their shame, seems quite inappropriate. Actually, the number sevenfold refers to paying them back for their evil intentions.

cheykam means the evil thoughts in their hearts. What appears to them like a sevenfold punishment, is in reality only a measure of their own shame, not even magnified at all. They do not receive more than is their due. Since there is no limit to the disgrace they have heaped on You, i.e. even the minutest amount would have constituted an infinitely great insult. A sevenfold retribution is quantitatively no different from a single retribution.

The word *el cheykam* may have been chosen to make clear that no *cherpah*, shame can attach to G'd, even if someone INTENDED to shame G'd. The penalty asked for then is not for actual damage caused, but only for what was in the hearts, i.e. *el cheykam* of the persons thinking such unworthy thoughts about G'd.

Similarly, the word *a-donay* at the end of the verse is to emphasize that G'd's stature has in no way been impaired by what others think about Him, or how they endeavor to denigrate Him.

We find something parallel to this in Pessikta de Rav Kahane 137 on Ezekiel 25,8 "because Moab and Se-ir say that Yehudah is no different from all the nations". They believed that the *keruvim*, angel like figures on the holy ark were images, like the nations used images to symbolize their deities. This they discovered after

13*Then we, Your people, the flock You shepherd, shall glorify You forever; for all time we shall tell Your praises.*

80 *For the leader; on shoshannim, eduth. Of Asaph. A psalm.*
2*Give ear, O shepherd of Israel who leads Joseph like a flock!*
Appear, You who are enthroned on the cherubim,
3*at the head of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh!*
Rouse Your might and come to our help!

Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the temple and captured the holy vessels.

The evil neighbors that the Psalmist talks about, are Se-ir and Moab and Ammon. He wants those nations to be strong enough to absorb 14fold punishments, i.e. *shivatayim*, twice 7, which is equivalent to the numerical value of *yad*, i.e. the hand of G'd when it strikes. (*Zeroacha* in verse 11 would refer to G'd's left "hand") Our neighbors deserve to be punished for equating Israel with other pagan nations.

13. We are Your people – i.e. our fate is supervised by You directly, not like that of the nations, for whom You have appointed *sarim*, celestial representatives to watch over them. We have no other shepherd than You. You watch over our bodies in this world. Since You endure forever, we will endure forever as a nation. This in order to be able to tell of Your glory from generation to generation, as stated in Exodus 10,2.

Even while we are in exile, and Your supervision is not so evident, we continue to thank You and tell of Your glory and of what You have done for us.

Psalm 80

1. In this Psalm Asaph asks G'd's mercy for the Jewish people for each of the 4 exiles separately. Therefore this Psalm is headed by a fourfold introduction i.e. *Lamnatzeach-el shoshanim-eydut– le-asaph mizmor.*

Concerning relief from the Babylonian exile, Asaph says *lamnatzeach*, i.e. that G'd should do so for His own sake. Concerning the second exile, i.e. Haman-Ahasverus, for which there would be two redeemers (Mordechai and Esther) he says *shoshanim*, a term used for *tzaddikim*. (see Shir Hashirim Rabbah 6,2 on the verse *velilkot shoshanim* to gather Shoshanim).

יד וַאֲנַחְנוּ עַמְּךָ וְצֹאן מַרְעִיתֶךָ נוֹדֶה לְךָ לְעוֹלָם לְדוֹר
וָדוֹר נְסַפֵּר תְּהִלָּתֶךָ:

פ א לַמְנַצֵּחַ אֶל-שֹׁשַׁנִּים עֵדוּת לְאָסָף מִזְמוֹר:
ב רֹעֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל הַאֲזִינָה נֹהֵג כַּצֹּאן יוֹסֵף יֹשֵׁב הַכְּרוּבִים
הוֹפִיעָה:
ג לִפְנֵי אֶפְרַיִם וּבִנְיָמִן וּמְנַשֶּׁה עוֹרְרָה אֶת-גְּבוּרָתֶךָ
וּלְכָה לִישֵׁעָתָה לָנוּ:

Concerning the Greek exile, – when G'd indicated by the miracle of the cruze of oil which burned 8 days instead of a single day, that He was pleased with Israel's martyrdom; the Psalmist refers to this as *eydut*. Concerning relief from the 4th exile, the Psalmist says *le-asaph mizmor*, that as soon as that time arrives it is up to him to compose a Psalm. This is so, since once the temple will be rebuilt, in accordance with what we have explained on Psalm 69,1, that will be the time when Asaph's own ancestor Korach will re-emerge. (Eliyahu Rabbah 30).

Since all this will not materialize until the final redemption, it is described as *le-asaph mizmor*, instead of the usual *mizmor le-asaph*.

2. He says "You have been Israel's shepherd during the time of the first temple, and have guided Joseph like a flock of sheep during the Babylonian exile". When Joseph had first come to Egypt the *Shechinah*, i.e. part of the Divine Presence had come down with him. This was in preparation of Jacob and his family's eventual arrival in Egypt. G'd had therefore treated Israel in Egypt as a shepherd treats his flock. Similarly, the *Shechinah* went to Babylon with Israel, as our sages explain, (Eycha Rabbati 1,32) based on Lamentations 1,6, *vatetze min bat tziyon hadarah* that Zion's beauty departed. The word *min bat* instead of *mi-bat* refers to the *manah*, the good portion Israel enjoys, namely the *Shechinah*.

It departed, i.e. it went with Israel once the Jewish infants were led into captivity. The infants being taken away is what had undermined Israel's ability to march into exile, as described in Lamentations there. The vision of Ezekiel 1,1, of the *Shechinah*'s presence in Babylon, sustained the people while there.

After THAT exile, G'd once again resumed being seated above the cherubs, i.e. in the second temple that was built. In the meantime, we await the time when You will again shine forth for them when the

4Restore us, O God; show Your favor that we may be delivered.
5O LORD, God of hosts, how long will You be wrathful toward the prayers of Your people?
6You have fed them tears as their daily bread, made them drink great measures of tears.
7You set us at strife with our neighbors; our enemies mock us at will.
8O God of hosts, restore us; show Your favor that we may be delivered.
9You plucked up a vine from Egypt; You expelled nations and planted it.

third temple will be built, just as You did when the second temple was built.

3. If we lack sufficient merit to arouse You on our behalf, remember Rachel who pleaded and wept for her children as we read in Eycha Rabbati 24, and to whom G'd responded by saying "stop crying... there is hope for you in the future". (Isaiah 31,16–17)

The Psalmist singles out Ephrayim Menashe and Benjamin whose flag (encampment in the desert, Numbers 2,18–22) was in the Western part of the encampment, to indicate that the *Shechinah* never departed from the Western Wall. These 3 tribes had all been descendants of Rachel. The Psalmist appeals to G'd "rouse Your might and come to our help!" The Psalmist does not want the gentiles to labour under the impression that G'd is asleep. The wording *le-cha li-yeshuatah lanu* suggests that Asaph expects this to be an indirect benefit, as he is primarily concerned with the *Shechinah* revealing itself as active for G'd's sake.

4. Since we have said time and again that once You return from Your self imposed exile that this will be seen by us as if our own redemption is at hand, we add that our own salvation will be easy enough to accomplish. We asked You NOT to wait till we begin to purify ourselves from our sins and to help us only subsequently, rather lead us back NOW, i.e. *hashiveynu* and then we will immediately be able to perform many commandments and good deeds so that You will have reason to shine Your face upon us. As a result, *nivashe-ah* we can and will be saved without having to undergo the painful birthpangs associated with the coming of the Messiah.

5. If Your neglect of us during this long exile is due to Your having listened to the suggestion by the angels to content Yourself with the

ד אֱלֹהִים הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ וְהָאֵר פָּנֶיךָ וְנִוָּשֵׁעָה׃
ה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת עַד-מָתַי עָשַׁנְתָּ בִּתְפִלַּת עַמֶּךָ׃
ו הֶאֱכַלְתָּם לֶחֶם דִּמְעָה וַתַּשְׁקֵמוֹ בִּדְמָעוֹת שָׁלִישׁ׃
ז תְּשִׂימֵנוּ מָדוֹן לִשְׁכֵנֵינוּ וְאֹיְבֵינוּ יִלְעֲגוּ-לָמוֹ׃
ח אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ וְהָאֵר פָּנֶיךָ וְנִוָּשֵׁעָה׃
ט גֶּפֶן מִמִּצְרַיִם תַּסִּיעַ תְּגָרֵשׁ גּוֹיִם וַתִּטָּעֶהָ׃

celestial creatures, (as outlined in Midrash Tehillim), the Psalmist makes it clear that G'd had never accepted that suggestion.

He says that such a suggestion could be conceived of only if G'd were ONLY ***elokim tzeva-ot***, i.e. the G'd of the myriads of angels. Since He is also ***hashem***, – the very idea that He would settle for the domain of the angels, is quite out of the question.

You would then have had to treat us like the OTHER nations, – who are not in exile. Since You keep us in exile, we are obviously still *amcha*, Your people. How long will You hide behind a smokescreen from our prayers? (similar to Lamentations 3,44, "You have screened Yourself behind a cloud?")

6. The Psalmist complains that even if the gates of prayer are locked, the gates of tears have never been locked (Berachot 32), and therefore the fact that You have fed us bread with tears and that the water we drink is composed partly of tears, are proof that we are still Your people. If You had abandoned us, – why discriminate against us so? At least we should share the good life this world has to offer to the gentiles!

7. Also, why then should You make us the target of strife with our neighbors, and have our enemies mock us? If the nations use our misfortune as an excuse to mock You and blaspheme, it is only because we ARE STILL Your nation!

8. Besides, even if You had decided to make do with only the host of angels, this could not be. Since the angels have only been created as a conduit for G'd's bounty to Israel, and indirectly to mankind as a whole, how long could they last once Israel had been abandoned by G'd? Therefore, we come back to our request in verse 4 "lead us back etc."

9. The suggestion that if the angels are not adequate as subjects to justify G'd's kingdom, He could exchange the Jewish people for some other nation, is dealt with by the Psalmist next. He explains that that is quite out of the question. G'd had selected Israel as the

10You cleared a place for it; it took deep root and filled the land.
11The mountains were covered by its shade, mighty cedars by its boughs.
12Its branches reached the sea, its shoots, the river.
13Why did You breach its wall so that every passerby plucks its fruit,
14wild boars gnaw at it, and creatures of the field feed on it?

only vine deserving to be transplanted, already prior to the Exodus, because NO OTHER nation could even remotely compare to it.

The Canaanite nations were expelled by G'd to plant Israel in the land of Israel, because those nations were morally insignificant by comparison with Israel.

10. Some nations, such as the Girgashi vacated their homeland even voluntarily to make room for Israel. (Vayikra Rabbah 17,6)

Another view. The attachment of the Canaanite nations to the land of Canaan had never been deep. A single *gerush* divorce sufficed to expel them. Not so with Israel which You G'd planted there and made take roots there. Prior to doing this, You removed potential obstacles to Israel taking root there, i.e. *pinita lefaneha*.

The obstacles referred to are of a spiritual nature, i.e. spiritual impediments. Even when Israel is no longer on its land physically, its roots remain there since its soul is anchored in the celestial counterpart to *eretz yisrael*, a region opposite terrestrial *eretz yisrael*. Because of this, *vatimale ha-aretz*, this one single nation filled up a land that had previously been home to seven nations simultaneously. Having one's spiritual roots in holiness, is reflected in fertility in this world also.

11. Not only the mountains of the land of Israel received the direct benefit of G'd's bounty, – but areas shaded by them also. This is a reference to the indirect blessings the nations receive as a result of Israel being the beneficiary of G'd's generosity. All of the kingdoms live in the shade of the vine called Israel. These kingdoms are often compared to *harim*, mountains.

The Psalmist alludes to the statement of our sages in Bamidbar Rabbah 1,3 that "if the nations of the earth had only realized how much they themselves have lost by exiling Israel and destroying its temple, they would never have done so". A small example are the 70 bullocks Israel used to offer on the altar on the tabernacle festival on

י פִּנִּיתָ לְפָנֶיהָ וַתַּשְׁרֵשׁ שָׁרָשֶׁיהָ וַתְּמַלֵּא-אָרֶץ׃
יא כָּסּוּ הָרִים צִלָּהּ וַעֲנָפֶיהָ אַרְזֵי-אֵל׃
יב תְּשַׁלַּח קְצִירֶיהָ עַד-יָם וְאֶל-נָהָר יוֹנְקוֹתֶיהָ׃
יג לָמָּה פָּרַצְתָּ גְדֵרֶיהָ וְאָרוּהָ כָּל-עֹבְרֵי דָרֶךְ׃
יד יְכַרְסְמֶנָּה חֲזִיר מִיָּעַר וְזִיז שָׂדַי יִרְעֶנָּה׃

behalf of the 70 nations of the earth. The accumulated merit of these sacrifices no longer accrue to them. (Sukkah 55)

So that no one should say that it is impossible for a vine situated in the land of Israel to provide shade in OTHER countries, the Psalmist explains that the branches of that vine are like cedars of G'd. *El* is the attribute of ***chessed***, the attribute the world is founded on. (Psalms 89,3) The soul of every ***tzaddik*** acts like the branches of that vine, spreading shade like a cedar, i.e. the merits of the ***tzaddik*** are what keeps the world going.

12. Though not literally extending to other countries, it does spread its harvest, i.e. its fruit to the Mediterranean and its shoots to the Euphratus river. At any rate, the thought that G'd could find another nation to successfully substitute for G'd's pilot project Israel, is quite unthinkable.

13. After Israel has been considered so worthy, – why have You broken down its fences so that all passers by can pluck its fruit? Perhaps this reflects the comments in Pessikta on Jeremiah 20,7 "You have seduced me and I have allowed myself to be seduced". The Midrash explains that an angel of G'd planted a foot each on the walls of Jerusalem, breaching them, and calling out and inviting the enemy to enter the vineyard since its owner guardian (G'd) no longer was inside. He challenged them to destroy the grape clusters, seeing their owner had departed. He (the angel) demonstrated that he had done so since the kings of the nations would not otherwise have believed him. (compare Lamentations 4,12, "none of the kings of the earth nor its inhabitants believed that an oppressor would gain entry to the gates of Jerusalem")

The Psalmist does not complain about what happened during the exile under Haman and Ahasverus (the Medes), since not a single Jewish person had actually been harmed at that time, nor had their wealth been taken away from them, on the contrary, the Jews emerged politically more secure than before Haman's decree. They even had exercised their will over their enemies.

14. Since Jerusalem had been captured and destroyed once,

15*O God of hosts, turn again, look down from heaven and see; take note of that vine,*
16*the stock planted by Your right hand, the stem you have taken as Your own.*
17*For it is burned by fire and cut down, perishing before Your angry blast.*
18*Grant Your help to the man at Your right hand, the one You have taken as Your own.*

future potential invaders were no longer in such awe of it. Even while Israel was on its own soil, its temple standing, the Greeks plundered, defiled the temple, raped Jewish women. The reason the Psalmist may compare the invader to a boar, i.e. a wild pig may be because Edom is also referred to by the name pig in Vayikra Rabbah 13,5, commenting on Leviticus 11,7.

It says there of the pig *ve-hu geyrah lo yigar*, which can mean that it will not stimulate another provocateur, i.e. that Edom will be the last exile. The domesticated pig, which is a simile for the exile under the Romans, (Edom), is not mentioned here. The description of the *chazir mi-ya-ar* the pig from the forest, is to indicate that it has its roots in *chitzoniyut*, is of Satanic origin, unlike the domesticated pig, (Esau) who after all has its roots in holiness, i.e. Isaac and is therefore related to Jacob.

15. Since at the time of *matan Torah*, the revelation at Mount Sinai, there had been arguments between G'd and the angels whether to give the Torah to Israel or keep it in heaven. (Yalkut Re-uveni Vayera) just as the angels had at first objected to the creation of man, foreseeing his sinfulness, – there was a chance that G'd would be only *elokim Tzeva-ot*, i.e. presiding over an army of angels. (compare Bereshit Rabbah 8,5)

The Psalmist urges that such an idea should not be revived, and invites G'd to look all the way from heaven – including the domain of the angels – to earth to see if He could find anyone more worthy than the Jewish people. (even when the latter are not at their best)

The Jewish people are the only ones who combine within them the ability to live simultaneously on 3 planes, i.e. in all three worlds seeing they have both body and soul.

16. Asaph reminds G'd of three merits Israel has going for it. They are compared to a *gefen* vine, they have the merit of the temple, and the merit of David, through whose merit the temple has been built. We know this from the Zohar section 4,198, which explains Kings I 8,16 "ever since I have brought My people out of Egypt, I have not

טו אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת שׁוּב נָא הַבֵּט מִשָּׁמַיִם וּרְאֵה וּפְקֹד
גֶּפֶן זֹאת:
טז וְכַנָּה אֲשֶׁר-נָטְעָה יְמִינֶךָ וְעַל-בֵּן אִמַּצְתָּה לָּךְ:
יז שְׂרֻפָה בָאֵשׁ כְּסוּחָה מִגַּעֲרַת פָּנֶיךָ יֹאבֵדוּ:
יח תְּהִי-יָדְךָ עַל-אִישׁ יְמִינֶךָ עַל-בֶּן-אָדָם אִמַּצְתָּ לָּךְ:

chosen a city among all the tribes of Israel for building a house where My name will abide, – but I have chosen David to rule My people Israel". Therefore, David built the foundations of the temple.

Israel's merit has already been mentioned in verse 9, i.e. *gefen mimitzrayim tassia*. Now the Psalmist reminds G'd of the merit of the temple and David's merit which had led to its foundation being laid.

kana refers to Exodus 35,16. Just as the stand of the *kiyor*, washbasin for the Priests, receives its water from the basin, so the terrestrial temple is the *kanah*, foundation, basis of the celestial sanctuary from which G'd's bounty is derived. *natah yeminecha* is analogous to Psalms 78,54, "this mountain His right hand has acquired", a reference to the temple Mount. If Israel has sinned, the Psalmist asks G'd "remember David whom You have called "son". (Psalms 2,7) "He said to me you are My son, I have begotten you this day". In other words, David is the *kanah*, basis of the holy temple.

17. This foundation has been burned by fire, cut off from its attachment to its celestial counterpart. The Psalmist asks G'd to restore the temple – but if it should prove dangerous to the people to face G'd's anger, *ga-arat panecha*, seeing they had not yet done *teshuvah*, repented, – he suggests that *ish yeminecha*, i.e. David should be the intermediary in accomplishing this.

18. We read in Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim 869 on Psalms 110,1 that the subject of the verse is the Messiah, i.e. "waits by My right hand until I make your enemies My footstool". The same person referred to there, is referred to by our Psalmist here as *ben adam imatzta loch*. Shemot Rabbah 21,6, tells us that when Moses was about to split the sea, the power in charge did not want to accept instructions from Moses until G'd had placed His right hand on the right hand of Moses. This is based on Isaiah 63,12 "who made His glorious arm march at the right hand of Moses".

The Psalmist here asks for a re-enactment of such Divine help for the Messiah to be able to perform his mission.

19*We will not turn away from You; preserve our life that we may invoke Your name.*
20*O LORD, God of hosts, restore us; show Your favor that we may delivered.*

81 *For the leader; on the* gittit. *Of Asaph.*
2*Sing joyously to God, our strength; raise a shout for the God of Jacob.*
3*Take up the song, sound the timbrel, the melodious lyre and harp.*
4*Blow the horn on the new moon, on the full moon for our feast day.*

19. Once before, at Mount Sinai, Israel had achieved immortality, i.e. freedom from the angel of death as well as from human rulers. (Shemot Rabbah 34,1) The Psalmist says that now when the Messiah will accomplish what Moses had accomplished at Mount Sinai in his time, there are those who worry that such achievements may be lost again just as they had been partially lost (the freedom from the angel of death) due to the sin of the golden calf. Asaph says that there is NO such danger this time. "We will not retreat from You. Now You will grant us life that will eliminate death forever. By removing Satan from us, i.e. the angel of death, the evil urge, – we will recognize Your name exclusively and proclaim it.

20. This is a level of spiritual maturity not found amongst the angels even, and this prospect entitles us to ask that You G'd reconsider any plan You might have had of being only *elokim tzeva-ot* as we have explained on verse 8.

Do not delay until we begin to do *teshuvah*, but shine Your face on us so that we shall be saved. Then we will be able to perform *mitzvot*, commandments and the *Shechinah* can present our *mitzvot* before the highest attribute of G'd, which will result in our immediate redemption.

Psalm 81

2. Our sages say that the righteous are great, since they can turn the attribute of justice into the attribute of mercy. (Bereshit Rabbah 33,3) In that vein, the Psalmist Asaph calls out "sing to *elokim*, i.e. the attribute of justice, praise Him for He is *uzeynu* our strength and will have mercy on us". – If you are not *tzaddikim*, righteous people, and therefore only qualify for the title Jacob, "shout and humble

יט וְלֹא-נָסוֹג מִמֶּךָּ תְּחַיֵּינוּ וּבְשִׁמְךָ נִקְרָא:
כ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ הָאֵר פָּנֶיךָ וְנִוָּשֵׁעָה:

פא א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-הַגִּתִּית לְאָסָף:
ב הַרְנִינוּ לֵאלֹהִים עוּזֵּנוּ הָרִיעוּ לֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:
ג שְׂאוּ-זִמְרָה וּתְנוּ-תֹף כִּנּוֹר נָעִים עִם-נָבֶל:
ד תִּקְעוּ בַחֹדֶשׁ שׁוֹפָר בַּכֶּסֶה לְיוֹם חַגֵּנוּ:

yourselves to the G'd of Jacob", for He too is your G'd and will forgive you in return for your shouting and your humbling yourselves.

3. For those who are *tzaddikim*, it is appropriate to sing to G'd loudly, to take the drum. However, if you only qualify for the appellation of *beney Ya-akov*, use only the *kinor*, i.e. a stringed instrument the sound of which is more subdued. You who are deficient should not make too much sound; even if you use a *nevel*, a stringed instrument, i.e. an instrument making more sound than the *kinor* but less than the *tof*, timbrel. At any rate, we should all rejoice with the attribute of justice, the difference between *tzaddikim*, and spiritually lower placed people being only the volume of sound to be produced.

4. We have said that the attribute of justice is good for Israel, and that it is from that attribute that G'd initiates the redemption for Israel His people. This being so, we would have expected that on New Year's day, a day reserved for the attribute of justice, we should at least sing to Him on that day to the accompaniment of *nevel* and *kinor*.

However, it is the command of G'd to blow only the shofar, ram's horn on that day even if we are *tzaddikim*, not just because it is a day of trouble for Jacob (the non righteous). On the contrary, Rosh Hashanah is viewed as a day of joy. It is a festive occasion the nature of its festiveness being temporarily obscured, i.e. *yom kesseh*, to be fully revealed only on the festival of tabernacles, i.e. *sukkot* when Israel jubilates with the palm fronds in their hands. (Tanchuma Emor 18) Then it becomes clear that Israel has emerged victoriously from G'd's examination and judgment on New Year's day.

For this reason the Psalmist says "blow the *shofar* on the new moon", i.e. *ba-kesseh* in anticipation of the day of our rejoicing" Because at this time the outcome is still obscured, we all have to blow *teruah* instead of using musical, melodious instruments.

5For it is a law for Israel, a ruling of the God of Jacob;
6He imposed it as a decree upon Joseph when he went forth from the land of Egypt; I heard a language that I knew not.
7I relieved his shoulder of the burden, his hands were freed from the basket.

5. Even though the sounds of the *teruah* are meant to frighten and to humble a person (Amos 3,6) "can a *shofar* be blown in town without frightening and alarming people"? you may argue that seeing that you are called "Israel", i.e. are righteous, what need is there for the ram's horn? The Psalmist says that the sound of the *shofar* at such a time is not without purpose. For those who are *tzaddikim*, the injunction is simply a *chok*, a law whose rationale has not been revealed. Just as the purpose of every other *chok* is to teach humility, so also this *chok*.

If however, the *shofar* is an indication that the time for judgment has arrived, an indication that the value of hearing the *shofar* lies in reminding us that our relationship with G'd is only on the level of "Jacob", not that of an "Israel", its meaning is certainly salutary.

6. You may argue that though the Psalmist told us that EVEN Rosh Hashanah the day of judgment is a day on which G'd is *uzeynu*, our strength, that the only difference is that it is *yom kesseh*, a day the outcome of which has not yet been revealed and awaits *sukkot* to be revealed, there may be those who are not willing to accept this interpretation. Those people may view Rosh Hashanah as a day of judgment devoid of any element of joy, but a day of serious troubles. – The Psalmist therefore provides proof that Rosh Hashanah can be a day of judgment and a day of joy at one and the same time, seeing G'd tempers justice with mercy. He has added the letters *yud-heh*, to the name of Joseph as we know from Shir Hashirim Rabbah 4,14 in acknowledgment of Joseph's virtue when exposed to the seductive powers of the wife of Potiphar. (Genesis chapter 39)

The word *samo* is to be read as *shemo*, His name, instead.

In a similar way we find acknowledgment of the Jewish people's virtue by G'd when we look at the names of the sons of the Jewish fathers, starting in Numbers 26,5, even about the sons of Reuben. *chanoch* becomes *ha-chanoch-i* and *palu* becomes *ha-palu-i*. They have the letters of the 2 lettered name of G'd appended at the respective end and beginning, to teach that the entire nation, and specifically Reuben to whom some taint might have attached (due to

ה כִּי חֹק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא מִשְׁפָּט לֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:
ו עֵדוּת בִּיהוֹסֵף שָׂמוֹ בְּצֵאתוֹ עַל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם שְׂפַת
לֹא-יָדַעְתִּי אֶשְׁמָע:
ז הֲסִירוֹתִי מִסֶּבֶל שִׁכְמוֹ כַּפָּיו מִדּוּד תַּעֲבֹרְנָה:

his father's criticism of him in his blessing in Genesis 49,4) could unreservedly be traced to the husbands of their mothers.

(compare this editor's translation of the author's commentary Torat Moshe, page 704) These 2 letters forming the name of G'd are also part of the terms for *ish* man, and *isha* woman in the Hebrew language, to indicate that without their presence, the relationship of man and woman is reduced to a mere physical passion which will burn itself out i.e. *eysh*, destructively, instead of producing offspring that keeps spirituality alive in this world. (Sotah 17)

To come back to Joseph. The extra letters in his name indicate that he had not committed a wrong against his master, though he had been jailed for such an indictment. The Talmud in Rosh Hashanah 10 describes Joseph as being released from prison on Rosh Hashanah. As soon as he was released he became the ruler of Egypt, i.e. *samo betzeto al eretz mitzrayim*. This was despite a clause in the constitution of Egypt (or in the horoscope of Egypt) that no slave could ever rise to a position of importance nor be allowed to wear garments of those in authority. (Bereshit Rabbah 89,7)

At any rate, Joseph's experience is testimony *eydut*, that the attribute of mercy is active on Rosh Hashanah. It revealed itself as Joseph's *uzzo* on that day. The importance of this lesson is that NOT Pharaoh elevated Joseph, but G'd. Concerning Joseph's having interpreted Pharaoh's dream, Asaph says that because an angel taught Joseph all 70 languages i.e. *sefat lo yadati*, this proved that his good fortune was due to G'd's planning for that night. Yalkut Shimoni on Psalms item 831 points out that this verse begins with the letter *ayin* (70) and ends with the same letter, thus giving us a hint that Joseph was taught the 70 languages by the angel. (Sotah 36)

7. After Asaph has informed us that G'd reviewed Joseph's fate favorably on Rosh Hashanah, the holy spirit adds further comments in the name of G'd, saying that not only did Joseph's departure from prison occur on Rosh Hashanah, but also his shackles had been removed on Rosh Hashanah while in prison, at a much earlier stage. Also his appointment in prison as cook i.e. *midud* occurred on Rosh Hashanah. Similarly, his promotion to being the warden's assistant occurred on Rosh Hashanah. (Genesis 39,22)

[8]*In distress you called and I rescued you; I answered you from the secret place of thunder I tested you at the waters of Meribah.* Selah.
[9]*Hear, My people, and I will admonish you; Israel, if you would but listen to Me!*

8. After the holy spirit describes that G'd treated Joseph well while he was in prison because he had not violated G'd's covenant and had refused to defile himself, some people may say that Joseph resisted temptation only with G'd's assistance, so where was his great *tzidkut*, righteousness? (compare Bereshit Rabbah 87,7 on Genesis 39,11) They will say that unless G'd had assisted him at the last moment, he would have allowed himself to be seduced.

Your kindness o G'd then is not to allow the *tzaddik* to succumb to temptation. Nonetheless, You G'd give the *tzaddik* full credit for NOT succumbing, as if the accomplishment had been entirely his.

The Psalmist asks G'd "why did You not do so for Your people"? They had been righteous at Mount Sinai, but You did not protect them against committing the sin of the golden calf! According to all the evidence we have, (Avodah Zarah 4) Israel was not morally on the level that made it capable of committing such a sin at that time!

The holy spirit here answers Asaph's (Israel's) plaintive question, saying *batzarah karata*, if I did not do so at the time, it was not because I did not love you sufficiently; after all I have often responded to your needs when you only called i.e. without appropriate prayers preceding your "call". (see Exodus 14,10) Even if your complaints were couched in unseemly language (Exodus 14,11) "are there not enough graves in Egypt that you had to bring us to die in the desert", I did not become angry at you but rescued you. *e-encha beseter ra-am*, I answered without display of anger and said to Moses "why do you cry to Me? speak to Israel and they will move". (Exodus 14,15)

The meaning of *ra-am* is similar to Samuel I 1,6 "in order to taunt her, *har-imah*". This proves G'd's love for you, and also that you loved me. This because at *mey merivah*, when I gave you a number of laws prior to *matan Torah*, the revelation at Sinai, you accepted them all willingly. (Exodus 15,25) Considering all this, why did You not help them avoid the sin of the golden calf?

9. This verse provides the answer to that question. At the time the Torah was given, (Exodus 19,5) G'd had said "and now, if you will surely listen to My voice... you will be a precious nation to Me."... Why did G'd not simply say *im tishma*, if you will listen, but *im shamo-a*

ח בַּצָּרָה קָרָאתָ וָאֲחַלְּצֶךָּ אֶעֱנְךָ בְּסֵתֶר רַעַם אֶבְחָנְךָ עַל
-מֵי מְרִיבָה סֶלָה:
ט שְׁמַע עַמִּי וְאָעִידָה בָּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם-תִּשְׁמַע-לִי:

tishma, if you will listen repeatedly"? Why, in the middle of His speech, does G'd say "you will become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation for Me"? (verse 6) The word *ve attem* "and you" in verse 6 are totally superfluous seeing the same people are addressed as had been addressed in the previous verse? Also, the introduction "and these are the words you are to say to the children of Israel" at the end of verse 6 seem totally redundant, since it is obvious that the children of Israel are being addressed!

The Psalmist therefore tells us that the holy spirit explained the meaning of these verses to him. We are basing ourselves on Shemot Rabbah 42,6 that it had been the *erev rav* the mixed multitude that had joined Israel at the Exodus who had made the golden calf. (Exodus 12,38) They had seduced Israel saying "these are your gods Israel that have brought you out of Egypt." (Exodus 32,8) We know that at that time Israel had been totally loyal since G'd Himself testifies concerning the period of the revelation "would that their hearts remain so, to fear the Lord..as on this day". (Deut. 5,26)

G'd had also warned the mixed multitude as well as Israel. He had warned the *erev rav*, mixed multitude, not to have another deity, and He had warned Israel not to listen to the *erev rav*.

The words *ve-attah im shamo-a tishme-u* etc. are to be read like this. If now the people, i.e. the mixed multitude will listen, then "YOU", i.e. the natural born Israelites will listen to My voice, *bekoli* and not to their voice. What G'd had said to the "people", *ha-am* was *ushemartem et briti* observe My covenant, remain loyal to have only the Lord as your G'd, then – though you are NOT natural born Jews – you will be a precious nation to Me. I can promise this says G'd, because *li kol ha-aretz* the whole earth is Mine, i.e. it does NOT belong to the *sarim*, celestial representatives that have SO FAR been responsible for your fate. So far, *beyt Yaakov*, i.e. the mixed multitude.

To the children of Israel, concerning whom G'd had told Moses *vetaged livney yisrael*, tell the children of Israel, He said "you will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to Me". G'd implies that the people whom He had addressed previously would have a spiritual relapse, *ve-attem* you however, will be a kingdom of priests etc. In other words, you must not listen to those people.

10You shall have no foreign god, you shall not bow to an alien god.
11I the LORD am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide and I will fill it.
12But My people would not listen to Me, Israel would not obey Me.
13So I let them go after their willful heart that they might follow their own devices.

This is the reason G'd had to say *eleh hadevarim* etc. at the end of verse 6. THESE WORDS were totally different from the words addressed to *beyt Yaakov* introduced in Exodus 19,3.

To sum up, the *erev rav* succeeded in seducing the *beney yisrael* though prior to that the hearts of the Israelites had been pure, integral.

The reason that Israel succumbed at the time of the golden calf, was the proximity of the wrong company. G'd had done His part in warning the *erev rav* not to become disloyal, and He had also urged Israel concerning what they should do. What further could G'd have done? *shama ami*, and *a-ida bach yisrael* refers to verse 6 in that same chapter, i.e. *tishma li* if you would listen, Israel would be Mine, not become part of the *erev rav*.

10. My warning to *ami*, i.e. the *erev rav* had been not to serve any other deity.

11. What I had said to the children of Israel at the time namely that you are a kingdom of priests and a holy nation was due to "I took YOU out of Egypt", not THEM.

The Psalmist hints at G'd's displeasure at the time Moses had prevailed on Him to let the *erev rav* be accepted. Moses had thought it appropriate to bring these people under the protective care of G'd's Presence. We have a clear indication in Exodus 12,38 that not G'd had taken them out of Egypt, but *allah ittom*, it went up with them, i.e. of their own free will, not by G'd's command. (Shemot Rabbah 42,6)

The destiny of the Jewish people to become *goy kadosh* a holy nation is due to their having G'd communicate with Israel directly, *peh el peh* mouth to mouth, as occurred during the first 2 of the ten commandments. The Psalmist describes the value of this experience by saying *harchev pi-cha va-amaleyhu*, open your mouth and I will fill it. This is what Midrash Chazit on Song of Songs 1,2 had in mind when it describes the 10 commandments as if each word had spoken to each Jew separately, independently. The words had been carried

ט לֹא-יִהְיֶה בְךָ אֵל זָר וְלֹא תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְאֵל נֵכָר:
י אָנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הַמַּעַלְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם הַרְחֶב-
פִּיךָ וַאֲמַלְאֵהוּ:
יא וְלֹא-שָׁמַע עַמִּי לְקוֹלִי וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא-אָבָה לִי:
יב וָאֲשַׁלְּחֵהוּ בִּשְׁרִירוּת לִבָּם יֵלְכוּ בְּמוֹעֲצוֹתֵיהֶם:

by an angel and each one had a message of its own. Each single Jew would be asked by the word "am I acceptable to you?" and each Jew would answer in the affirmative. The *dibur*, word would say "I comprise so and so many commandments" and the Jew would indicate his willingness to perform these commandments. Similarly, he would accept the penalty that would be imposed if he failed to observe the commandment or would violate it.

He would also specifically accept G'd being the only G'd in response to being questioned on this subject by the *dibur*. As soon as that individual acceptance had taken place, the word would "kiss" the Jew on his mouth. This is what is referred to in Song of Songs 1,2 "He kisses me with the kisses of His mouth".

In short, by means of the merit of the multitude of kisses received every time each Jew affirmed a commandment and made a commitment, the holiness of the word became an integral part of his soul, which is intimately related to his mouth.

We know about this intimate relationship from Genesis 2,7 "G'd blew a soul of life in his nostrils, and Adam became a *nefesh chayah*, a talking creature, a creature filled with holy spirit, *ruach memallelah*. (Onkelos on that verse)

12. The holy spirit concludes by saying that neither the *erev rav* nor the *beney yisrael* were willing to listen to G'd, but Israel listened only to *ami*, My people, i.e. the *erev rav*.

13. The alternative, namely actively preventing the *erev rav* from sinning is out of the question, because the principle of freedom of choice is inviolate, i.e. *haba letame potchim lo*, if someone is bent on defiling himself or others, one (G'd) does not interfere with him. (Shabbat 104) This is what the Psalmist explains here. The sin was facilitated further by the parchment containing the holy name of G'd and an inscription *aleh shor*, arise ox, which had been retrieved by Moses' adopted son Michah at the time Moses had tried to locate and raise the coffin of Joseph to fulfil the brothers' promise to him to take it along to the land of Israel. Michah had thrown this parchment into the crucible that Aaron had thrown the gold in. (Tanchuma Ki

14 *If only My people would listen to Me, if Israel would*
follow My paths,
15 *then would I subdue their enemies at once, strike their*
foes again and again.
16 *Those who hate the LORD shall cower before Him;*
their doom shall be eternal.
17 *He fed them the finest wheat; I sated you with honey*
from the rock.

82

A psalm of Asaph.
God stands in the divine assembly; among the divine beings He pronounces judgment.

Tissa 19) There had been some excuse then to view the emergence of the golden calf as Divinely approved. The *erev rav* capitalized on that fact.

14. Had Israel initiated the sin of the golden calf, G'd would have destroyed them. Seeing that *ami*, the *erev rav* were the instigators, i.e. an inferior group of people, was a mitigating circumstance. Had *ami* listened to Me, Israel would never have been exposed to this temptation.

15. Now, when Israel proceeds to invade and conquer the Canaanites, I will first defeat and humble the respective *sarim*, of the Canaanite tribes, as we know from Isaiah 24,21 "G'd will punish the host of heaven in heaven, and the kings of earth on earth". G'd says that He will not let Israel kill the Canaanites on earth by their own might, but that He will also deliver them from their oppressors here on earth, once He has disposed of their celestial representatives. He will not do in accordance with the verse "He expelled the enemy from you" (Deut. 33,27) when G'd expelled the celestial representatives and told Israel to destroy them down here on earth, i.e. *vayomer hashmed*.

16. The reason G'd will fight for us on both fronts is that Israel's guilt at the golden calf episode was not THAT great, since the *erev rav* i.e. *mesan-ey hashem* had denied that G'd is invisible and had insisted on a visible deity, saying *eleh elohecha*.

The Israelites themselves had been *tzaddikim* both at the time of the Exodus and on the day the Torah had been given. Ezekiel 16,8 confirms this when he refers to "your time for love had arrived". On the day the Torah had been given, G'd had said to Moses "all they

יד לוּ עַמִּי שֹׁמֵעַ לִי יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּדְרָכַי יְהַלֵּכוּ׃
טו כִּמְעַט אוֹיְבֵיהֶם אַכְנִיעַ וְעַל-צָרֵיהֶם אָשִׁיב יָדִי׃
טז מְשַׂנְאֵי יְהוָה יְכַחֲשׁוּ-לוֹ וְיִהְיֶה עִתָּם לְעוֹלָם׃
יז וַיַּאֲכִילֵהוּ מֵחֶלֶב חִטָּה וּמִצּוּר דְּבַשׁ אַשְׂבִּיעֶךָּ׃

פב

א מִזְמוֹר לְאָסָף אֱלֹהִים נִצָּב בַּעֲדַת-אֵל בְּקֶרֶב אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט׃

have said is good". (Deut. 5,25) G'd wishes that Israel would continue to feel as it felt at that time, "says the Psalmist, i.e. *viyhi ittam le-olam.*

17. Because of this merit, G'd fed them the finest wheat.. Not only that, but even the rocks will provide honey for them to be sated, as we read in Amos 9,13 "the mountains will drip with wine, the hills will wave with grain".

Psalm 82

1. All commentators are agreed that the word *elokim* the first time refers to G'd, the second *elokim* means simply "judge" or "judges".

Still, this does not solve the problem that according to Berachot 6, the term *adat el* means a group of judges. They should then at least have been called *adat elokim* the appropriate term for judges (Sanhedrin 56) since that word describes the attribute of justice. The term *el* is precisely the reverse, meaning *chessed*, loving kindness. (Zohar 3, 30)

However, the Zohar section 3,31 states on the verse in Psalms 7,12 "and G'd expresses His anger daily", that the attribute of love is angry at the attribute of justice, attempting to restrain the attribute of justice from giving full vent to anger and punishment.

It is possible then that a collegium of judges on this earth, BECAUSE they demonstrate that justice is being pursued ON EARTH, enable the Divine attribute of justice NOT to go into operation.

The Psalmist's meaning then is that the G'd, i.e. the attribute of justice, while normally needed to execute justice, *nitzav* remains standing, i.e. inactive *ba-adat el* as long as there are judges on earth who perform that task. The attribute *el* can be effective in restraining

[2]How long will you judge perversely, showing favore to the wicked? Selah.
[3]Judge the wretched and the orphan, vindicate the lowly and the poor,
[4]rescue the wretched and the needy; save them from the hand of the wicked.
[5]They neither know nor understand, they go about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth totter.
[6]I had taken you for divine beings, sons of the Most High, all of you;

the attribute ***elokim*** when it can point to a group of judges on earth who perform its task. Not only that, but the attribute of justice can actively cooperate ***bekerev elokim*** participate in justice on earth, i.e. to insure that the pronouncements of the human tribunal will be in line with the true justice pronounced by the heavenly tribunal. Another possibility: The word ***bekerev*** refers to the "innards" of the judge. G'd will inspire each human judge to arrive at true judgment. This may also be the deeper meaning of Bereshit Rabbah 48,7 commenting on Genesis 18,1 "and he sat at the entrance of the tent".

The Midrash says that G'd told Abraham to remain seated as an indication of events in the future. In the future, Israel will remain seated in the houses of the Torah academies, the synagogues etc. while reciting the ***keriyat Shema***, whereas the ***Shechinah*** will remain standing above them. The Midrash quotes our verse as proof for this contention. Since there is no such concept as "standing" when we speak of celestial creatures, the Midrash may mean that the ***midat hadin***, attribute of justice refrains from acting until the human tribunal has had a chance to deal with the matter requiring judgment. Although Abraham was NOT a tribunal but only a single individual, G'd was prepared to wait (before destroying Sodom) until He had heard Abraham's arguments. The Midrash therefore does not EQUATE that situation with ours, but only says *siman* it is an indication, there is a similarity to future events.

2. Asaph asks that if G'd leaves it all to the human judges, how can He inspire people to fear His justice? Human justice, even if well intentioned, often founders on the fact that the wicked are by nature violent and succeed in frightening human judges to pass faulty verdicts.

Asaph challenges the judges – how long will you continue to pass unfair judgments? In case you believe it is better to disqualify

ב עַד-מָתַי תִּשְׁפְּטוּ-עָוֶל וּפְנֵי רְשָׁעִים תִּשְׂאוּ-סֶלָה:
ג שִׁפְטוּ-דָל וְיָתוֹם עָנִי וָרָשׁ הַצְדִּיקוּ:
ד פַּלְטוּ-דַל וְאֶבְיוֹן מִיַּד רְשָׁעִים הַצִּילוּ:
ה לֹא יָדְעוּ וְלֹא-יָבִינוּ בַּחֲשֵׁכָה יִתְהַלָּכוּ יִמּוֹטוּ כָּל-מוֹסְדֵי אָרֶץ:
ו אֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם וּבְנֵי עֶלְיוֹן כֻּלְּכֶם:

yourselves as judges in view of the extortion and violence that prevails.

3. Asaph calls on the judges to fearlessly pronounce judgment for the weak section of the population, i.e. the widows and orphans. They should resist the thought that if they find the poor guilty, judgment will not be carried out anyways due to the debtors' insolvency, whereas finding the rich guilty is useless since the judgment cannot be enforced due to the rich being violent.

4. The Psalmist urges the judges to rescue the poor, to save them from the wicked! By pronouncing judgment AGAINST the poor (where warranted) Asaph says that the judges save the poor from purgatory after death! Let them not REMAIN guilty until the day they die and will have to atone for their guilt in purgatory. Even if they have to beg alms from door to door to meet the payment imposed upon them by the judges, this is better than purgatory.

dal and *evyon* are at the extreme ends of the 4 groups *dal, yatom, ani, rosh.*

This advice is good when the creditors of these 4 groups of debtors are *resha-im*, wicked people, not prepared to forego the payment of the judgments in cases where the debtors are genuinely unable to pay the sums imposed. *Hatzilu miyad harsha-im.* In cases of extreme need, do as David did, who paid the judgments imposed on the destitute out of his own pocket. (Yalkut Shimoni Samuel 147, on Samuel II 8,15)

Alternately, *miyad resha-im hatzilu*, – having judged the poor fairly, – G'd will save you judges from the wicked people.

5. The Psalmist says to the judges that if they do NOT judge the poor etc. their sin will be greater than that of the *resha-im* the extortionists etc. since they do not know their guilt nor the punishment in store for them. By your silence or inaction however, you undermine the pillars of the earth, one of which is *din.* (Avot 1,18) By subverting one pillar, the other two will also start to totter.

6. The holy spirit speaks on behalf of G'd concerning judges not

7but you shall die as men do, fall like any prince.
8Arise, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are Your possession.

83 *A song, a psalm of Asaph.*
2O God, do not be silent; do not hold aloof; do not be quiet, O God!
3For Your enemies rage, Your foes assert themselves.
4They plot craftily against Your people, take counsel against Your treasured ones.

fit for their positions. "I have said in My Torah that you are G'd like, i.e. you wear the mantle of authority normally reserved for G'd. (Exodus 22,8)

Similarly, I said about the people of Israel generally that you are all *beney elyon*, sons of the Most High, such as when G'd had said "Israel is My first born son". (Exodus 4,22) Had you lived up to this description you would have been like angels, i.e. immortal, free from the authority of the angel of death.

7. Alas, you will die like Adam had to die because you have corrupted justice. Adam too had enjoyed freedom from the angel of death, and only sin made him mortal. You will also fall victim to the authority of human rulers, and your being equipped with a holy soul will not help you in this respect.

The celestial representatives of the nations, i.e. spiritual beings are also subject to "death", to a downfall, as we know from Isaiah 24,21, "on that day the Lord will punish the host of heaven in heaven". Though these *sarim* are spiritual in nature, they derive from the regions called *chitzonim*, i.e. negative spiritual spheres as opposed to sanctity oriented spheres.

The meaning of *achad hasarim*, seems to correspond to Daniel 10,13 and Daniel 10,20 the *sar malchut Paras* and the *sar malchut Yavan* when Daniel was in awe of such spiritual forces opposing him. (the Jewish people) These two *sarim* are examples of the 70 *sarim*, each one representing one of the 70 nations. (Sukkah 55)

8. After the holy spirit, speaking on behalf of G'd has concluded, it turns to G'd Himself and says that since man has failed to establish true standards of justice on earth, and since You G'd have said that civilization will collapse as a result of this, You G'd should arise and mete out justice to each one according to the decisions of Your celestial Court.

ז אָכֵן כְּאָדָם תְּמוּתוּן וּכְאַחַד הַשָּׂרִים תִּפֹּלוּ׃
ח קוּמָה אֱלֹהִים שָׁפְטָה הָאָרֶץ כִּי־אַתָּה תִנְחַל בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם׃

פג א שִׁיר מִזְמוֹר לְאָסָף׃
ב אֱלֹהִים אַל־דֳּמִי־לָךְ אַל־תֶּחֱרַשׁ וְאַל־תִּשְׁקֹט אֵל׃
ג כִּי־הִנֵּה אוֹיְבֶיךָ יֶהֱמָיוּן וּמְשַׂנְאֶיךָ נָשְׂאוּ רֹאשׁ׃
ד עַל־עַמְּךָ יַעֲרִימוּ סוֹד וְיִתְיָעֲצוּ עַל־צְפוּנֶיךָ׃

If You fail to do this, says the *ruach hakodesh* and You leave it to man to administer justice regardless of whether this be Jews or gentiles, they will all perish because of an absence of true justice on earth. You alone would be the One who inherits this whole earth. (there would not be any people left) This would not make any sense, since You do not need the physical universe and have only created it for man's sake, i.e. *ve-ha-aretz natan livney adam* (Psalms 115,16)

Psalm 83

1. Asaph calls this hymn both a song and a Psalm. Inasmuch as it extols the joy over the destruction of the wicked, it is a Psalm. (Proverbs 11,10 "there are shouts of joy when the wicked perish") This is of personal concern to Asaph as a descendant of Korach. Destruction of the gentile nations heralds the redemption of Israel, which will allow the gates of the temple which have sunk into the earth to rise again. Alongside that event, Korach and his family will also re-emerge. (Eliyahu Rabbah 30)

Asaph had felt better about the fate of Korach, once he had heard that the same fate would befall the gates of the temple as had befallen Korach. This is why Psalm 69 is NOT an elegy but a hymn reflecting joy.

2. He addresses G'd in the certainty that G'd, i.e. *elokim*, attribute of justice, will not remain silent and will demand judgment for the wicked. He calls concerning G'd's attribute of kindness, i.e. the attribute of *el* and says *al tishkot*, let not the attribute of justice become comparable to the attribute *el*.

3. For if they have stirred like masses of the sea (see Isaiah 17,12) against Your nation" – I would have remained silent, says the Psalmist. However, it is Your enemies that raise their head, i.e. their efforts are

5They say, "Let us wipe them out as a nation; Israel's name will be mentioned no more."
6Unanimous in their counsel they have made an alliance against You—
7the clans of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites,
8Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;
9Assyria too joins forces with them; they give support to the sons of Lot. Selah.
10Deal with them as You did with Midian, with Sisera, with Jabin, at the brook Kishon—
11who were destroyed at En-dor, who became dung for the field.
12Treat their great men like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,

directed at YOUR glory. I am aware that our enemies have the right to be the head, whereas at this time I must be the tail. But this they kept secret.

4. The Psalmist commences with citing open manifestations of the enemy's attitude. In Babylonia, Nebuchadnezzar, when he made all the Jews bow down to his image, he tried to prevent the Jews from being Your people. They (he and his advisors) had taken counsel because they claimed that Your being hidden meant that there was no longer a Jewish G'd. (compare Alshich's commentary on the relevant passage in Daniel chapter 3) The same applies to Darius' counsellors' attempt to force even Daniel to forswear his G'd. (Daniel chapter 6)

5. Haman and Ahasverus's attempt on the lives of the Jews was also based on hatred of the Jewish G'd and an attempt to prove His impotence. (Megillah 14) They were both partners in this attempt. It is like the parable of the owner of the mound and the owner of the trench. (Talmud there). Especially during the exile of the Greeks, every effort was made to separate Israel from its G'd. (Bereshit Rabbah 4,4). The Jews were forced to inscribe the horns of their oxen with inscriptions denying their allegiance to the G'd of Israel. All this to forestall help by G'd, and to result in the oblivion of Israel as G'd's nation.

6. All this was insignificant by comparison to what they are planning during the present exile ***alecha*** against YOU, when the

ה אָמְרוּ לְכוּ וְנַכְחִידֵם מִגּוֹי וְלֹא-יִזָּכֵר שֵׁם-יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד:
ו כִּי נוֹעֲצוּ לֵב יַחְדָּו עָלֶיךָ בְּרִית יִכְרֹתוּ:
ז אָהֳלֵי אֱדוֹם וְיִשְׁמְעֵאלִים מוֹאָב וְהַגְרִים:
ח גְּבָל וְעַמּוֹן וַעֲמָלֵק פְּלֶשֶׁת עִם-יֹשְׁבֵי צוֹר:
ט גַּם-אַשּׁוּר נִלְוָה עִמָּם הָיוּ זְרוֹעַ לִבְנֵי-לוֹט סֶלָה:
י עֲשֵׂה-לָהֶם כְּמִדְיָן כְּסִיסְרָא כְיָבִין בְּנַחַל קִישׁוֹן:
יא נִשְׁמְדוּ בְעֵין-דֹּאר הָיוּ דֹמֶן לָאֲדָמָה:
יב שִׁיתֵמוֹ נְדִיבֵמוֹ כְּעֹרֵב וְכִזְאֵב וּכְזֶבַח וּכְצַלְמֻנָּע כָּל-נְסִיכֵמוֹ:

nations band together in a covenant against You o G'd.

7–8. The Psalmist lists a selection of those nations.

9. The latter nations have only one thing in mind, to desecrate Your name as we know from Yevamot 16, that when others entered the temple to plunder silver and gold, those nations only wanted to desecrate the Torah scrolls. That is the meaning of Lamentations 1,10 "the enemy laid hands on everything dear to her (Israel).. when those who are NOT allowed to become Jews entered the sanctuary". Also Ashur joined them in this great act of desecration.

When the Psalmist adds the word *selah*, he refers to the statement in the book of Joseph ben Gurion describing anti G'd forces at work during the destruction of both temples.

10. Having mentioned what these nations have done against Israel as well as against G'd, the Psalmist asks G'd to proceed against them as He had once against Midian, i.e. let them kill each other as we read in Judges 7,22, or as happened with Sisera's army (Judges 5,8) when Israel had not even been allowed to fashion arms or carry them. Nonetheless, not a warrior was left of Yavin's army, the river Kishon swept them all away. (Judges 5,33)

11. They were destroyed at Eyn Dor, became dung for the soil.

12. We do not want our enemies to be killed by our hands, only their chiefs, so that it will be clear to one and all that this all occurs for our sakes, just as in the case of Midian when Gideon slew the Midianite princes. (Judges 8,21) This is what Asaph asks of G'd as revenge for what the nations have done to US.

13. But concerning those nations who had said "let us take G'd's meadows as OUR possessions", the ones who made a covenant against You, (verse 6).

13*who said, "Let us take the meadows of God as our possession."*
14*O my God, make them like thistledown, like stubble driven by the wind.*
15*As a fire burns a forest, as flames scorch the hills,*
16*pursue them with Your tempest, terrify them with Your storm.*
17*Cover their faces with shame so that they seek Your name, O LORD.*
18*May they be frustrated and terrified, disgraced and doomed forever.*
19*May they know that Your name, Yours alone, is the LORD, supreme over all the earth.*

84 *For the leader; on the* gittit. *Of the Korahites. A psalm.*
2*How lovely is Your dwelling-place, O LORD of hosts.*
3*I long, I yearn for the courts of the LORD; my body and soul shout for joy to the living God.*

14. Do not kill them instantly my G'd, even if I still have to remain in exile a little while longer, but let them become like straw before the wind, like a wheel, ***galgal***. The wheel that keeps turning always experiences a brief period during which it is high above the ground. The Psalmist does not wish the enemy of G'd to experience even the momentary illusion of ascendancy. Therefore, he says that the wheel should be like the chaff, tossed about by the wind, never LIFTED, only turned over but constantly remaining in a downcast position. It turns in different directions i.e. North, South etc. but never upwards and downwards.

15. The Psalmist does not want this to be ALL that happens to those people, but G'd's fire should consume them, eventually.

16. He does not necessarily want them to be burned but to become terrified.

17. Make them so ashamed of their former conduct that they will be forced to seek out Your name! They should ask for Your attribute of mercy! Only in this way can they become penitent, not if You kill them immediately. This is in order that they will live long enough to admit that YOU ARE the Lord of the whole universe.

18. After that they will be ashamed forever for having dared rise against You. Having recognized the folly of wickedness, they will remain terrified, ***veyachperu*** and become even more deeply

יג אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ נִירְשָׁה-לָּנוּ אֶת נְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים:
יד אֱלֹהַי שִׁיתֵמוֹ כַּגַּלְגַּל כְּקַשׁ לִפְנֵי-רוּחַ:
טו כְּאֵשׁ תִּבְעַר-יָעַר וּכְלֶהָבָה תְּלַהֶט הָרִים:
טז כֵּן תִּרְדְּפֵם בְּסַעֲרֶךָ וּבְסוּפָתְךָ תְבַהֲלֵם:
יז מַלֵּא פְנֵיהֶם קָלוֹן וְיבַקְשׁוּ שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה:
יח יֵבשׁוּ וְיִבָּהֲלוּ עֲדֵי-עַד וְיַחְפְּרוּ וְיֹאבֵדוּ:
יט וְיֵדְעוּ כִּי-אַתָּה שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה לְבַדֶּךָ עֶלְיוֹן עַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ:

פד א לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-הַגִּתִּית לִבְנֵי-קֹרַח מִזְמוֹר:
ב מַה-יְּדִידוֹת מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֶיךָ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:
ג נִכְסְפָה וְגַם-כָּלְתָה נַפְשִׁי לְחַצְרוֹת יְהוָה לִבִּי וּבְשָׂרִי יְרַנְּנוּ אֶל-אֵל חָי:

disgraced. Then they will perish, their confession alleviating any further misery.

19. The reason retribution and death must not occur immediately, is so that they first realize whom they have been facing.

Of course, as long as the temple was standing, there had been evidence of Your Presence at all times. But now, when there is no temple, and only Your name is above the earth, (not a visible symbol of Your Presence) this is the only way.

The tone sign on the word ***elyon*** indicates that it does not belong to the words following, i.e. ***al kol ha-aretz***.

Psalm 84

2. It is a well known fact that ever since the universe has been created, G'd wished for a home amongst man. (Tanchuma Bechukotai 3) This is what the sons of Korach refer to when they say "how lovely is Your dwelling place, Lord of hosts", i.e. how lovely that though this world is a physical one and You G'd are the Lord of totally spiritual beings, ***tzeva-ot***, You have made Your home amongst us.

The plural ***mishkenotecha***, i.e. Your dwellings, refers to the temple on earth which is compartmentalized, i.e. sanctuary and holy of holies.

3. Although my soul yearns for ***chatzrot hashem***, – my soul does

[4]*Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself in which to set her young, near Your altar, O LORD of hosts, my king and my God.*
[5]*Happy are those who dwell in Your house; they forever praise You.* Selah.
[6]*Happy is the man who finds refuge in You, whose mind is on the [pilgrim] highways.*

not consider them the ultimate site of sanctity; my soul is satisfied only when it ascends to the sanctuary of the celestial regions. My yearning for the terrestrial sanctuary is limited to my body, i.e. my heart and flesh sing with joy, since at least they have not been denied a sanctuary on earth.

4. One could say that the desire to enjoy the sanctuary with one's body is a strange and unworthy one, seeing that the whole concept of sanctuary is a spiritual one, and that it would have been more appropriate to yearn for the celestial sanctuary only.

The Psalmist counters by sayin "how can my heart and flesh NOT long for the temple in our midst, since even lesser living creatures such as the free bird finds its nest etc." (no doubt not within the precincts of the temple).

Nonetheless the sparrow or swallow want to deposit their young near Your altar. What difference can it make to such a bird whether its young are close to Your altar or not? Is not the G'd of *tzeva-ot*, the Supreme G'd presiding over an army of angels, and He is MY king. MY G'd? Surely He does not relate to birds in a similar fashion? So what gain does the bird hope to achieve by placing its young ones near such holy sites deliberately?

It can only be due to G'd having provided the free roaming birds with an instinctive urge to come close to the altar, since it is itself fit to become an offering to heaven on that altar. (the idea is that since eventually the bird too has to die, there is no nobler death than serving as an offering to G'd in the process. Ed.)

Using the bird as an illustration, we can extrapolate to ourselves, and draw a logical inference. If a mere bird expresses longing for the holy site on earth, how much more so man. If man desires to sing to the living G'd, why not meanwhile at least grant his body the chance to enjoy G'd's sanctuary on earth, i.e. His courtyards? This desire is divinely inspired, and hail to the person who has the good fortune to actually fulfil this desire.

5. Another reason for this desire of mine, says the Psalmist, is the fact that those who are blessed with the good fortune of sitting in

ד גַּם-צִפּוֹר מָצְאָה בַיִת וּדְרוֹר קֵן לָהּ אֲשֶׁר-שָׁתָה
אֶפְרֹחֶיהָ אֵת-מִזְבְּחוֹתֶיךָ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת מַלְכִּי וֵאלֹהָי:
ה אַשְׁרֵי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתֶךָ עוֹד יְהַלְלוּךָ סֶלָה:
ו אַשְׁרֵי אָדָם עוֹז-לוֹ בָךְ מְסִלּוֹת בִּלְבָבָם:

the terrestrial temple, i.e. *ashrey yoshvey veytecha* will acquire the merit to praise You forever, i.e. in the celestial sanctuary. This means that both their bodies and souls will be granted fulfilment.

Another dimension of this verse may be glimpsed if we observe the constant switching by the Psalmist of singulars and plurals for the people he discusses in this and subsequent verses.

Verse 5 is in the plural. Verse 6 commences in the singular only to conclude in the plural. Verse 7 commences with the plural and ends with the singular. Why does the Psalmist alternate constantly in this fashion?

Our sages (Shir Hashirim Rabbah 4,3 on the words *kechut hashani*) say that the temple is called *oz*, and that concerning it the Torah says in Leviticus 26,19 "I will break the pride of your *oz*, glory". This corresponds to Pessikta Rabbati 15 and Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim item 818 where we are taught on the verse "hail to those whose sin has been forgiven" (Psalms 32,1) and "hail to the man who G'd does not consider guilty" (Psalms 32,2).

The person who is the subject of verse two is superior to the person mentioned in verse 1, since the latter had not committed any sins which needed G'd's forgiveness.

The Psalmist describes first of all those people who sit in the temple.

6. Even greater i.e. more fortunate is a person whose lifestyle itself is an *oz*, i.e. who is like a walking sanctuary himself. How can he achieve such a status? By *boch*, by serving as carrier of the *merkavah*, G'd's entourage. (Bereshit Rabbah 47,6 commenting on Psalm 32) The difference between the two types of people mentioned in that chapter is that there are two *messilot*, paved paths that lead to G'd.

A *tzaddik* can arrive in the hereafter immediately after death or after having traversed purgatory and having been cleansed of his sins in purgatory. Both these alternatives are something that the *tzaddikim*are aware of, i.e. *bilvavam*. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai wept on his death bed being unsure by which route he would attain his hereafter. (Berachot 28)

7They pass through the valley of Baca, regarding it as a place of springs, as if the early rain had covered it with blessing.
8They go from rampart to rampart, appearing before God in Zion.
9O LORD, God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob.
10O God, behold our shield, look upon the face of Your anointed.

7. Here the Psalmist talks (plural) about those who traverse the valley of tears, i.e. purgatory, convert it into a fountain *ma-ayan yeshitihu*, and on the strength of that leave purgatory and ascend to their place in heaven. We have a similar Midrash describing Moses as asking "perhaps you have seen them cry?" and joining them in their weeping.

However of the one described in verse 6, the one described in the singular, (since there are only few such people) who due to their abundance of merit need not cry and worry about which path they will have to take to ascend to their place in the hereafter, – the Psalmist says *gam berachot ya-ateh*. He is so full of blessings that when HE passes purgatory on his way to heaven, others will be rescued from there by merely being in his proximity. *moreh*, i.e. he teaches OTHERS the way out of purgatory. Those people will bless him, fashion a cover of blessings for him.

8. Another distinction between these two groups of *tzaddikim* is this. Those who are in need of the spiritual support of the temple will not proceed directly to their eternal rest in the celestial regions, the place called the Zion of the heavens, but will proceed *michayil el chayil*, step by step. They will advance spiritually in stages. Not so the one of whom it is said *oz lo bach* (verse 6). He will ascend immediately and be seen by G'd in that Zion.

9. There are special angels whose task it is to hear and answer human prayers. There are, however, deserving individuals whose prayers are listened to by G'd Himself. It is the request of the sons of Korach that though G'd is the One who presides over a host of angels etc. who listens to prayers, that G'd should not be so far removed that He does not personally listen to the Psalmist's prayers.

Having listened to them, he does not want G'd to say "I have heard, you may desist from offering further prayers". Rather, *ha-azinu*, continue listening inasmuch as You are the G'd of Jacob. Though You had given him the assurance (Genesis 28,15) "I will bring you back to

ז עֹבְרֵי בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא מַעְיָן יְשִׁיתוּהוּ גַּם-בְּרָכוֹת יַעְטֶה
מוֹרֶה:
ח יֵלְכוּ מֵחַיִל אֶל-חָיִל יֵרָאֶה אֶל-אֱלֹהִים בְּצִיּוֹן:
ט יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת שִׁמְעָה תְפִלָּתִי הַאֲזִינָה אֱלֹהֵי
יַעֲקֹב סֶלָה:
י מָגִנֵּנוּ רְאֵה אֱלֹהִים וְהַבֵּט פְּנֵי מְשִׁיחֶךָ:

this land, for I will not abandon you", and G'd had sent a company of angels to precede him and protect him, Jacob did not refrain from offering prayer as we read in Genesis 32,11 "please save me from my brother Esau etc."

He did so in the knowledge that the prayers of the righteous are pleasing to G'd. This is why the Psalmist adds *selah*, i.e. that the prayers are of an ongoing nature, not a one time request. Even when You have responded once, You will respond again on other occasions. (see our commentary on Psalms 21,3, that G'd grants the desire of man's heart.)

10. In calling *magineynu*, the Psalmist refers to G'd's attribute of mercy which he pleads should be present when *elokim* i.e. the attribute of justice comes to render judgment. He also invokes the merit of David, i.e. *peney meshichecha*. (Psalms 3,4) Later (verse 12) he explains that *elokim* is both shield and sun, as we will explain.

David's merit is not invoked to lessen Israel's determination to do penitence, since it considers ONE day in the temple preferable to one thousand days anywhere else.

To understand the meaning of this passage, we refer to Rabbi Yaakov of Avot 4,16–17 who describes this life as the vestibule to the palace, and who urges that in order to qualify for the full benefit of the hereafter, man must prepare himself in this life. – He also used to say that "a single hour in this life filled with penitence and good deeds is more beautiful than all the hereafter, whereas one hour of spiritual bliss in the hereafter is worth more than all of this life".

If Rabbi Yaakov meant by *olam hazeh* this world, the world of action, and that the hereafter is the region in which the reward is being received, he did not need to employ the parable to describe the two worlds, but could have stated so outright. Also, Rabbi Yaakov's advice to prepare oneself in the vestibule in order to gain entry to the palace is so self evident that he did not need to mention it. Furthermore, the second saying of Rabbi Yaakov describing the value

> [11]*Better one day in Your courts than a thousand [anywhere else]; I would rather stand at the threshold of God's house than dwell in the tents of the wicked.*

of the good deeds in this world seems unconnected to his previous statement.

Normally, the introduction "he used to say", in *Masechet Avot*, indicates that the statement that follows resolves a difficulty or contradiction found in the preceding statement. Saying that a little investment in good deeds in this world is worth ALL the reward in the world to come, is incomprehensible. Surely, the MORE investment in good deeds in THIS life, the GREATER the reward in the hereafter?!

There is no incentive for man to do *teshuvah* repentance, unless he is reminded of the day he will die. This prospect he must keep in the forefront of his thinking at all times. We have explained this on Eccles. 9,5 "the living are aware that they will all die, whereas the dead do not know anything", as well as on Psalms 89,49, "how can a man live without being aware of impending death etc.?" We said that Kohelet means that no one can live in this world without constantly being aware of the urgency of escaping death of his soul. Although, in principle, penitence is possible without such awareness, repentance of a high standard, good enough to save man from doing a stint in purgatory and to cleanse himself there from residual sins, is unlikely, unless a person constantly carries awareness of impending death with him. This is also the reason that the advice "turn penitent a day before you die", (Avot de Rabbi Nathan 15,4) is queried in the Talmud Shabbat 153. They ask there "does anyone then know which day he is going to die"? They answer that therefore a person must do *Teshuvah* daily, since he does not know if he will still be alive on the following day.

For that reason, Rabbi Yaakov adds that one must not even think that one has a whole day left to do *Teshuvah*. Every hour can be one's last, and all the time one has at one's disposal in this life may be the time it takes to cross from the vestibule into the palace. This is the meaning of the parable with the *olam hazeh*. This life is such that it may be snuffed out at any moment. Therefore, Rabbi Yaakov urges a person to live ALL the time as if preparing himself for entry into the palace. If you live as if you had a WHOLE day left to live, you might delay doing proper *teshuvah*. The advice *hatken atzmecha* then means to live in accordance with the assumption that all the time you have left is the time it takes to cross from the vestibule to the palace.

יא כִּי טוֹב-יוֹם בַּחֲצֵרֶיךָ מֵאָלֶף בָּחַרְתִּי הִסְתּוֹפֵף בְּבֵית
אֱלֹהַי מִדּוּר בְּאָהֳלֵי-רֶשַׁע׃

One may think that the statement of Avot de Rabbi Nathan is more apt, and that *teshuvah* which is the result of a thorough examination of one's lifestyle and the errors one has committed is more comprehensive. To emphasize that he does NOT think so, Rabbi Yaakov is quoted as saying repeatedly that one single hour of *teshuvah* is worth all the *olam haba*.

olam haba consists of two elements. 1) life there is infinitely long. 2) There is a feeling of spiritual bliss, serenity.

Rabbi Yaakov says that one could assume that infinitely long life without this spiritual bliss is also possible in *olam haba*. If so, an hour of good deeds here is worth all the life in *olam haba*. An hour of *teshuvah* in this world then would be enough to acquire the necessary merit for that kind of *olam haba*. The Talmud in Avodah Zarah 3 tells us "he who toils on Sabbath eve, will eat on the Sabbath". This is the meaning of "more than all the life in the world to come" in Rabbi Yaakov's statement. Do not think that I was referring to the spiritual bliss and serenity to be enjoyed in the hereafter, says Rabbi Yaakov. Concerning THAT aspect of the world to come, one hour there is superior to all the life in this world, however one has lived it down here.

In summation, though it is good for man to be constantly aware of impending death, and that he has to do *teshuvah* today, it is still better to view oneself as on the threshold to the palace, and one has to do *teshuvah* immediately.

11. What the Psalmist is trying to say here is very similar to what we have just discussed. "Better one day in Your courtyard", i.e. in this life which is compared to the *chatzer*, courtyard, vestibule before the palace, before the world to come. The Psalmist calls this world *chatzer* whereas he calls the world to come *bayit*, house. Another example of such a description is found in Psalms 92,4, i.e. *shetulim beveyt hashem bechatzrot elokeynu yafrichu*. They are planted in the house of G'd and will sprout in the Lord's courtyards. We explained in that connection that the *tzaddik* can be compared to a tree planted in a ritually pure place, i.e. in the celestial regions. His branches and foliage, i.e. his body overhangs and blossoms in this world, i.e. in the *chatzrot elokeynu yafrichu*.

Here the Psalmist says that though it is good to spend the day in Your courtyards, i.e. in physical life on earth, it is far better in fact than 1000 such days in the *olam ha-elyon* the higher world, from the

12For the LORD God is sun and shield; the LORD bestows grace and glory; He does not withhold His bounty from those who live without blame.
13O LORD of hosts, happy is the man who trusts in You.

85 *For the leader. Of the Korahites. A psalm.*
2O LORD, You will favor Your land, restore Jacob's fortune;

point of you of accomplishments to be attained in life, – still he has not chosen to describe himself as being in THAT position. He prefers to view himself as on the threshold of the palace, i.e. the house of G'd, as suggested by Rabbi Yaakov.

I gladly forego the extra period at my disposal on earth during which I could prepare even better for the life to come, and I choose eternal life immediately. The reason is that the danger of being surrounded by the *oholey resha*, those in the tents of wickedness and my being exposed to that, outweighs the opportunity of doing a better kind of *teshuvah* in the interval.

These *oholim*, may be described as the "curtains" created by our sins, the effect of which is a separation between us and G'd. (Isaiah 59,2) When enough sins are committed, the curtain becomes like a tent which enfolds man, totally separating him from G'd. The Psalmist does not want to chance having to live in tents built on his sins, i.e. *resha*. The desire to escape being enmeshed in sin is after all the most sincere and thorough form of *teshuvah* possible.

12. Now the Psalmist elaborates on the request he had made in verse 9. The simile of the sun and the shield is used to illustrate that just as a shield protects against being burned by the rays of the sun, so the presence of the attribute of mercy when the attribute of justice is at work, protects from the brunt of the attribute of justice. Should someone ask whether the presence of the attribute of mercy results in certain sins being waived by the attribute of justice, the Psalmist denies this. Since the judge of the whole earth does justice, this is inconceivable, and the Talmud in Baba Kama 50 has already stated that anyone who claims that G'd waives His right to punish certain sins will be punished by G'd withdrawing His protective Presence from him, since such a person encourages the commission of sins. What does G'd do then? (so that the effect of the attribute of mercy becomes discernible)

He, i.e. the attribute of mercy does three things which are helpful to the person about to be judged. He grants *cheyn*, i.e. grace in the

יב כִּי שֶׁמֶשׁ וּמָגֵן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים חֵן וְכָבוֹד יִתֵּן יְהוָה לֹא
יִמְנַע-טוֹב לַהֹלְכִים בְּתָמִים:
יג יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אַשְׁרֵי אָדָם בֹּטֵחַ בָּךְ:

פה א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לִבְנֵי-קֹרַח מִזְמוֹר:
ב רָצִיתָ יְהוָה אַרְצֶךָ שַׁבְתָּ שְׁבוּת יַעֲקֹב:

eyes of the attribute of justice, as we know from the benediction we recite daily in our morning prayers "let us attain favour, loving kindness and compassion in Your sight and in the sight of all those who behold us".

He also grants *kavod*, honour, dignity, i.e. the afflictions that man is subjected to are handed out in such a manner that his dignity does not suffer thereby.

Thirdly, He does not withhold goodness from those who walk in naive innocence anxious to avoid committing sins, even if these people are not careful to observe and carry out the positive commandments of the Torah they ought to perform. If the attribute of justice alone would be at work, such goodness of G'd would be withheld from ANYONE failing to observe positive commandments when there are no objective obstacles to his carrying out these commandments. This is what G'd had in mind when He said to Moses (Exodus 33,19) "I will be gracious to whomsoever I choose to extend grace".

Our sages explained that G'd has a great treasure chamber from which He draws in order to provide of His goodness for all those who do not enjoy personal merits. (Berachot 7) This refers to people who though NOT burdened with sins, do not have credits through the performance of G'd's commandments.

13. When I said that You should look at Your anointed, i.e. David, I did so, says the Psalmist, because no human being has displayed as much *bitachon*, personal faith in You the Lord of hosts as has Your servant David. When the Philistines were literally over his head, he refrained from making a move in accordance with the instructions issued to him (Samuel II 5,24) i.e. "when you hear the sounds of steps in the tops of the mulberry trees". The reference may be to the sounds of the leaves rustling in the wind.

David had decided rather to die in innocence than to violate G'd's instructions even at the risk of losing his life. (see Midrash Tehillim on

3*You will forgive Your people's iniquity, pardon all their sins;* Selah.
4*You will withdraw all Your anger, turn away from Your rage.*
5*Turn again, O God, our helper, revoke Your displeasure with us.*

chapter 27. compare what the Midrash says for the reason of this strange injunction issued to David)

Psalm 85

2. Most commentators are agreed that the descendants of Korach refer to the present long exile when they commence "You G'd have done the will of Your land". This seems hard to understand seeing that the land spit out Israel because of its failure to live up to G'd's commandments in particular the observance of the *shemittah* legislation, i.e. to let the land lie fallow once in 7 years. What hurry was there then to readmit Israel to its land? (compare Leviticus 18,25)

Also, the Psalmist speaks about *shavta*, You have returned (intransitive): the word he should have used is *hashivota*, You have brought back (transitive form of *shuv*) – the exiled of Jacob. Also, it is strange that the Psalmist speaks about *shevut Yaakov* instead of *shevut Yisrael* spelling *shevut* read *shevit*.

Actually, the Psalmists in their emotionally charged anguish about this terrible exile we find ourselves in, state how bitter they are that this exile is so different from the exile of Babylonia, for instance. It is worse than that exile in three respects. At that time the exile was shortened compared to the prediction that it would last 70 years, corresponding to the number of years that Israel had failed to observe the *shemittah* legislation. (Leviticus 26,35 Rashi and Torat Kohanim)

You waited ONLY till the land's requirements had been met and then Your *Shechinah*, Presence returned to the land of Israel. This is the reason the Psalmist says *shavta*, i.e. You G'd, and not *hashivota*, referring to the people of Israel.

G'd's *Shechinah* returned to the land BEFORE Israel returned. We have explained this on Psalms 126,1. Because Your *Shechinah* returned first, – it had become an *eyt ratzon*, a time of goodwill, i.e. *ratzita*. You had shown goodwill by returning to Your land. This is turn facilitated the return of *shevut Yaakov*, the exiled of Jacob. You did not wait until we were worthy, i.e. until we had become *shevut*

ג נָשָׂאתָ עֲוֹן עַמֶּךָ כִּסִּיתָ כָל-חַטָּאתָם סֶלָה:
ד אָסַפְתָּ כָל-עֶבְרָתֶךָ הֵשִׁיבוֹתָ מֵחֲרוֹן אַפֶּךָ:
ה שׁוּבֵנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ וְהָפֵר כַּעַסְךָ עִמָּנוּ:

yisrael, but allowed us to return though we were merely *shevit yaakov*.

3. Also during our second exile, that under the Medes (Haman), You have displayed Your kindness for us. Although the Jewish people had been guilty of bowing to Haman's image, had certainly not qualified for the title *yisrael*, had in fact incurred the death penalty for worshipping an idol plus assorted other sins (Megillah 12) – You forgave their sin, i.e. raised it to be considered as committed unintentionally. You did this through the repentance which Israel undertook under the leadership of Mordechai and Esther.

All that had remained of their sin was *chatat*, an unintentional sin, instead of *avon* an intentional sin. (Yuma 86) Since their repentance had been inspired by fear, not love of G'd, their sins were not converted into merits.

Still, You "covered" their sins, as Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai said to his students (Megillah 12) "since Israel bowed to the idols only because of fear of Haman, G'd was content to punish them by only frightening them with death".

4. Also during the Greek exile, You displayed Your kindness. After Your anger had become widespread and You had even allowed an idol to be placed in Your sanctuary, and Israel's daughters had been violated, – Your anger abated. This was like at the time when Pinchas had succeeded in turning away Your wrath (Numbers 25,11) from Israel. This time the Macabees succeeded in turning away Your wrath.

5. Therefore, the Psalmists ask that G'd should display kindness also during this 4th and bitter exile. It is impossible to request redemption without repentance; redemption either occurs because we are worthy, or through a painful process called *chevley mashiach*, as we have explained frequently.

The kindness we ask for is that since it is Your way that You assist those who wish to purify themselves, (Shabbat 104), we agree that such a sequence of events is proper under normal circumstances. However, having regard to our present circumstances, You should not wait until we make the first move, but You should start returning. Do not wait; since You are the G'd of our salvation and our hopes rest totally on You, that You will redeem us in the end anyhow, please do so already NOW.

6Will You be angry with us forever, prolong Your wrath for all generations?
7Surely You will revive us again, so that Your people may rejoice in You.
8Show us, O LORD, Your faithfulness; grant us Your deliverance.

Since we may not DESERVE such kindness, do it for the sake of Your own peace of mind.

The Psalmist bases this request on Shemot Rabbah 29,9 – that whenever G'd looks at the temple which is in ruins and at the flourishing theaters etc. of the Romans at the same time, He becomes angry at once. If You G'd lead us back in repentance, Your anger will dissipate, everything will be restored to its former state.

Alternately, Zohar 2,239, commenting on Amos 5,2 "fallen not to rise again is the virgin Israel", says that these words have been said to the Jewish nation who have lost hope of being able to regenerate themselves as they did after the fall of the first temple. This time only You Yourself can bring about this regeneration. This is the meaning of *lo tossif kayam* she cannot rise again. (by her own efforts)

Since it would be unseemly for Israel to request this from G'd in so many words, the Psalmist does not have the effrontery to ask "bring us back" but asks "come back", using the intransitive form of the verb, when in reality he had in mind the transitive form.

Another request we have from G'd is "revoke Your anger with us".

The Midrash (Bereshit Rabbah 50,9) explains that when Jacob came to Mount Moriah, he saw the angels on the ladder who had been cast out from the celestial regions because they had bragged to Lot "WE are going to destroy the city" (Sodom) (Genesis 19,13). These angels had then been exiled to earth, only to be allowed back to heaven now after 130 years. (Genesis 28,12)

Israel may be saying something similar to that Midrash. Just as Jacob's arrival at Mount Moriah had dissipated G'd's anger at His two angels, so our return, i.e *shuveynu*, our salvation will dissipate Your anger with us.

6. Israel asks "surely it is not Your way to be angry at us forever"? After all, Your anger should not continue except *ledor vador*, i.e. to the third generation?

Surely, since Your anger at Amalek will last only *midor dor* – Your anger with us cannot extend for longer! (Exodus 17,16) If those

לְדֹר וָדֹר׃ תִּמְשֹׁךְ אַפֶּךָ נָּנוּ תַּאֲנַף־בָּנוּ הַלְעוֹלָם׃
תְּחַיֵּינוּ וְעַמְּךָ יִשְׂמְחוּ־בָךְ׃ הֲלֹא אַתָּה תָּשׁוּב
וְיִשְׁעֲךָ תִּתֶּן־לָנוּ׃ הַרְאֵנוּ יְהוָה חַסְדֶּךָ׃

words would mean "forever" then there would NEVER be a world free of Amalek, and there would never be redemption for us!

7. To understand this verse, we must recall the Midrash Chazit on Song of Songs 1,2, about "he kisses me with the kisses of his mouth". The Midrash describes the time when the ten commandments had been given and Israel had been frightened of hearing G'd's voice directly and had asked Moses to be their intermediary. Afterwards, Israel is reported to have had second thoughts about this, when they had compared what the last 8 commandments had sounded like secondhand. They had requested of Moses that G'd should let them hear the last 8 commandments once more, directly from Him. Moses replied that at that point in time this request could not be granted, but there would come a time when Israel would hear the word of G'd directly from His mouth.

Moses had referred to the future described in Ezekiel 36,216 when the prophet says in G'd's name "I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh".

Our sages in Vayikra Rabbah 11,9 say that in the future G'd will be at the head of the dancers for the *tzaddikim* and will expound the Torah to them personally. The idea is that during that era we will all have achieved the stature of prophets; not only will we have shed the residual pollutant of the serpent imbibed as a result of Adam's sin, but we will all be pure and holy, so that we do not require the services of an intermediary and can hear G'd's word directly.

We can rejoice with G'd, though He is holy. Having said that G'd should return to the land of Israel without waiting for us to exercise our free will to raise ourselves, the Psalmist did so, so that no one could say that G'd will remain angry with us forever.

He uses an additional argument. It is that delay may result in our becoming enmeshed irretrievably in the impurity which results from sin. Since You are going to redeem us anyways, even if at the time called *be-itto*, and at THAT time we will take our joy in You instead of in matters of the flesh, –show us Your kindness and salvation now.

8. If there is still a doubt that we will be able to stand hearing You speak, do not do as You did at Mount Sinai when Your fire, thunder etc. overwhelmed and frightened us, but display Your kindness etc.

9 *Let me hear what God, the LORD, will speak; He will promise well-being to His people, His faithful ones; may they not turn to folly.*
10 *His help is very near those who fear Him, to make His glory dwell in our land.*
11 *Faithfulness and truth meet; justice and well-being kiss.*
12 *Truth springs up from the earth; justice looks down from heaven.*
13 *The LORD also bestows His bounty; our land yields its produce.*
14 *Justice goes before Him as He sets out on His way.*

86 *A prayer of David.*
Incline Your ear, O LORD, answer me, for I am poor and needy.

9. Then we will be able to hear You speak without fear. This will be so, since once the heart of stone has been removed, there is no danger of the people having a relapse of their spiritual level as there had been at the time of the golden calf.

10. We must not worry that the fear Israel experienced at Mount Sinai would be repeated. (Exodus 20,16) The reason we do not worry is because G'd is close to those who revere Him ..in OUR land. Since His glory is bound up with our land, we share this relationship. This is an advantage we did not possess during the revelation at Mount Sinai in the desert when there had been no such relationship of the *Shechinah* to the land. Once on holy soil, we need not worry when G'd addresses us directly.

11. The Psalmist explains that ***chessed*** and ***emet*** had clashed (as we explained in the Midrash, ***emet*** opposing man's creation). Similarly, ***tzedakah***, charity and ***shalom***, peace also had collided, i.e. ***nashaku***.

12. The clash between ***emet*** and ***chessed*** had been resolved, since ***emet*** does exist on earth (not as claimed), and the Torah study of the Jewish people promotes such ***emet***, making the objection that man is innately untruthful void. All Torah legislation furthers truthful behaviour of man. This merit entitles us to invoke the attribute ***el***, as in Psalms 57,3.

This is the true meaning of ***emet me-eretz titzmach***, that truth sprouts from earth, i.e. one impediment has been disposed of. There remains the fact that ***tzedek mishamayim nishkaf***, that ***tzedek*** is not

ט אֶשְׁמְעָה מַה-יְדַבֵּר הָאֵל יְהוָה כִּי יְדַבֵּר שָׁלוֹם אֶל-
עַמּוֹ וְאֶל-חֲסִידָיו וְאַל-יָשׁוּבוּ לְכִסְלָה:
י אַךְ קָרוֹב לִירֵאָיו יְשׁוּעָתוֹ לִשְׁכֹּן כָּבוֹד בְּאַרְצֵנוּ:
יא חֶסֶד-וֶאֱמֶת נִפְגָּשׁוּ צֶדֶק וְשָׁלוֹם נָשָׁקוּ:
יב אֱמֶת מֵאֶרֶץ תִּצְמָח וְצֶדֶק מִשָּׁמַיִם נִשְׁקָף:
יג גַּם-יְהוָה יִתֵּן הַטּוּב וְאַרְצֵנוּ תִּתֵּן יְבוּלָהּ:
יד צֶדֶק לְפָנָיו יְהַלֵּךְ וְיָשֵׂם לְדֶרֶךְ פְּעָמָיו:

פו א תְּפִלָּה לְדָוִד הַטֵּה-יְהוָה אָזְנְךָ עֲנֵנִי כִּי-עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן
אָנִי:

yet at home on earth, waiting for peace on earth to be able to join it, just like *emet* had been paired with *tzedek*. For this reason I asked G'd to decree that *shalom* be found on earth, since G'd had promised "I will grant peace on earth" (Leviticus 26,6)

13. The way G'd will do this will be similar to the way He planted *emet* on earth, i.e. at that time He provided Torah as a supplement to the attribute of *emet*. Now He will have to supply *tov* as a supplement to *shalom*. He will open His treasure house and provide. (Deut. 27,13) Our sages in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer chapter 5, say that when Israel is not Torah observant, the soil draws water from the sea. This is a situation comparable to a harlot becoming pregnant from her customer. On the other hand, when Israel does observe the Torah, G'd opens His treasure house in the heavens and makes the earth produce blessings. This will regenerate the whole earth. Our land will not produce as does the rest of the earth which suffers from the curse pronounced on earth after Adam's sin, i.e. thorns and thistles. (Genesis 3,17)

The Psalmist says that when G'd will channel His goodness to our land, the land will produce only what is planted, there will be no weeds, no harmful insects etc. i.e. *titen yevulah*, it will yield all it is capable of yielding and is meant to yield. Possibly, the blessing includes the absence of chaff, stubble etc., that only ready made food as described in Psalms 72,16 will be produced.

14. By means of this blessing, *tzedek* which had only looked down from the heavens, will set out from heaven and descend to earth forming a partnership with *shalom* on earth. The practice of *tzedakah* helps establish *shalom*, peace.

[2]Preserve my life, for I am steadfast; O You, my God, deliver Your servant who trusts in You.

Psalm 86

1. Since it is the assumption of our sages that this hymn was composed after David fled from Saul, we will accept this premise as the basis of our commentary. The word ***aneyni*** without the preceding letter *vav* is puzzling, since if David first says ***hateh hashem oznecha***, please incline Your ear o G'd, i.e. listen and then ***ve-aneyni*** and answer me, this would be normal. The word ***aneyni*** independently, is strange. Perhaps David meant to say "I know it is Your way to answer already before a prayer has been articulated. (Isaiah 65,24) Therefore I plead that You should not wait until I have properly edited and presented my prayer, but ***aneyni***, answer it in its unspoken form as soon as I ask You to get ready to listen. (before You have HEARD a prayer)

The reason David invokes this privilege is ***ani ve-evyon ani***, I find myself poor and destitute. When a poor man craves a piece of bread, one does not make him wait, since he might die from being famished in the interval. Such a thing happened to Nachum ish gam-zu. (Taanit 21) He had been asked by a destitute person to be fed, and while Nachum was unloading the packages he was carrying to meet the poor man's request, the latter died. The same urgency exists, implied David, while he is exposed to the sword of Saul. In other words "my urgency is like that of a person who needs bread immediately".

2. To understand this verse, we must preface with a statement in the Talmud Avodah Zarah 5 on Deut. 5,26 "wish that they would always be in this frame of mind, to revere Me and follow all My commandments". The Talmud understands this as a severe reprimand by Moses to Israel who had proven to be ungrateful since they should have answered G'd saying "please grant that we shall keep this frame of mind!" This accusation by Moses seems incomprehensible in view of the principle of freedom of choice which is the cornerstone of Jewish beliefs. This means that "all is within the power of heaven, except fear of heaven!". (Berachot 33) How could Moses reprimand Israel then? (after 40 years, a different generation at that)

There is however, a difference in the stature of a person who has attained the level of ***chassid*** and the stature of a person who as not yet attained that moral ethical level. The ordinary person still has not subdued his ***yetzer hara*** and placed it at the service of G'd. The Torah had talked about ***levavam***, their "dual" hearts. In other words, G'd wishes that those who had attained the spiritual level when

ב שָׁמְרָה נַפְשִׁי כִּי-חָסִיד אָנִי הוֹשַׁע עַבְדְּךָ אַתָּה אֱלֹהַי
הַבּוֹטֵחַ אֵלֶיךָ:

BOTH parts of their hearts are actively engaged in serving the Lord, should remain on that spiritual level. SUCH a wish is NOT a limitation of one's freedom of choice, but a wish to PRESERVE one's spiritual level. When the Talmud Yuma 38 explains Samuel I 2,9 where Hannah thanks the Lord "For He guards the steps of His pious", this is what is meant. In a similar vein, Rabbi Meir had said in Avot 6,1 "he who occupies himself with Torah for a pure motive, G'd keeps away from sin and brings him close to being virtuous. The same idea is expressed in an intensified form in Yevamot 99, when the Talmud says of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair that since G'd protects the beasts of the righteous from committing acts which could involve their owners in unintentional sin, how much more would G'd protect the righteous themselves from committing such sins!

When David faced two dreadful alternatives when he fled from Saul, he said in his heart "I am doomed if I am killed, and I am doomed if I have to kill Saul, even in self defence. If I am killed, my body is doomed, and if I have to kill, my soul will be doomed." Therefore, David asked G'd's mercy for both eventualities. Since he considered incriminating his soul as the greater of the two evils, and since he considered himself as one of G'd's "pious", he asked G'd first to preserve the purity of his soul, i.e. *shamrah nafshi*.

Because he was a *chassid* a pious person, he considered such a request as perfectly proper. Concerning protection of his body from Saul's pursuit, something that depended largely on Saul exercising his freedom of choice, David asks to be protected, i.e. that G'd would have to interfere with Saul's freedom of choice.

Since Saul was planning to kill David, had set out on a sinful path, he no longer deserves G'd's protection from committing a sin. This complicates David's problem. Therefore, David says "help Your servant, i.e. ME, since You are MY G'd.

Normally, we would have expected David to say *haboteach bach*, who trusts in You. Why does the Psalmist use the unusual preposition *elecha* instead of *bach*? The reason is that David does NOT ask for his body to be saved for his own sake, but for G'd's sake. Seeing that he, David is G'd's servant, how could G'd watch him come to harm? G'd had protected Israel against Egypt for the same reason that David wants protection against Saul. He had NOT allowed the Egyptians to carry out THEIR plan.

Besides, David admits that if G'd saves him, he will himself also

3Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I call to You all day long;
4bring joy to Your servant's life, for on You, LORD, I set my hope.
5For You, LORD, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on You.
6Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; heed my plea for mercy.
7In my time of trouble I call You, for You will answer me.
8There is none like You among the gods, O LORD, and there are no deeds like Yours.
9All the nations You have made will come to bow down before You, O LORD, and they will pay honor to Your name.
10For You are great and perform wonders; You alone are God.

derive personal satisfaction from that, but he considers this secondary to his desire to continue to serve G'd and display faith in Him. In fact G'd would be saving His servant then, rather than David in a personal capacity.

3. Our sages (Yevamot 64) said that the reason all the matriarchs were barren by nature was that G'd desires the prayers of the righteous. Therefore He delayed the ability of the matriarchs to have children so that they should pray to Him to be granted children. Possibly, the reason David said after ***hateh oznecha–, aneyni***, is that G'd should NOT wait with answering him till he had prayed at length, though he assures G'd that despite G'd listening to him immediately, he will ***ekra elecha kol hayom***, I will devote the whole day in prayer to you, though You have already done what I was about to ask.

4. Concerning his soul, David pleads not to have to suffer the anguish which would result if he had to kill a Jew of Saul's entourage. He wishes to be made happy by not having to commit such an act. This is a PERSONAL request, made in his capacity as a private individual.

5. If the predicament were one in which many are involved, there would be no need for all this pleading, since G'd is forgiving by nature, and would immediately respond to communal prayer.

6. Daily, a prayer is offered on behalf of all of Israel. This is the

ג חָנֵּנִי אֲדֹנָי כִּי-אֵלֶיךָ אֶקְרָא כָּל-הַיּוֹם:
ד שַׂמֵּחַ נֶפֶשׁ עַבְדֶּךָ כִּי-אֵלֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי נַפְשִׁי אֶשָּׂא:
ה כִּי-אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי טוֹב וְסַלָּח וְרַב-חֶסֶד לְכָל-קֹרְאֶיךָ:
ו הַאֲזִינָה יְהוָה תְּפִלָּתִי וְהַקְשִׁיבָה בְּקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנוֹתָי:
ז בְּיוֹם צָרָתִי אֶקְרָאֶךָּ כִּי תַעֲנֵנִי:
ח אֵין-כָּמוֹךָ בָאֱלֹהִים אֲדֹנָי וְאֵין כְּמַעֲשֶׂיךָ:
ט כָּל-גּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ יָבוֹאוּ וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְפָנֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי
וְיכַבְּדוּ לִשְׁמֶךָ:
י כִּי-גָדוֹל אַתָּה וְעֹשֵׂה נִפְלָאוֹת אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים לְבַדֶּךָ:

opening prayer. It is followed by individual pleas to G'd for our private needs.

David asks "listen to my all inclusive prayer, You G'd PERSONALLY; afterwards listen to those parts of my prayer in which I voice personal requests. I know that my "public" prayer receives an immediate response, therefore I do not worry about a signal from You that the prayer has been heard.

7. But on a day when I am in trouble – do not delay in responding to my prayer until You have heard all of it. Since I do not have enough self confidence that You hear MY prayer immediately when it is only the prayer of an individual, I plead for a sign of response.

8. The fact that I keep referring to Your attribute ***hashem***, the 4 lettered name, the attribute of mercy, does not mean that I am unaware of Your "higher" attribute, i.e. *elokim*. I am perfectly aware of Your *adnut*, mastery and authority, that it is incomparable, just as *ma-asecha*, Your deeds (which are incomparable).

9–10. All the nations will pay tribute to that attribute of Yours, since You alone perform miracles etc. Possibly the use of both *adonay* and *elokim* in verse 8 can be explained in the following manner. Gentile nations are apt to be impressed only by G'd's publicly performed miracles. Though these result in a measure of belief, it does not lead to their believing in G'd exclusively, in their forswearing any other deity.

They only believe ***gadol attah*** (verse 10) that You are great, while continuing to worship other deities. We however, as distinct from *kol hagoyim*, all the nations, know and believe that there is NO other G'd, without needing G'd to demonstrate this to us by His actions. Therefore, David first emphasizes that fact – saying offhandedly *ve-*

[11]*Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; let my heart be undivided in reverence for Your name.*
[12]*I will praise You, O LORD, my God, with all my heart and pay honor to Your name forever.*
[13]*For Your steadfast love toward me is great; You have saved me from the depths of* Sheol.
[14]*O God, arrogant men have risen against me; a band of ruthless men seek my life; they are not mindful of You.*
[15]*But You, O LORD, are a God compassionate and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.*
[16]*Turn to me and have mercy on me; grant Your strength to Your servant and deliver the son of Your maidservant.*
[17]*Show me a sign of Your favor, that my enemies may see and be frustrated, because You, O LORD, have given me aid and comfort.*

eyn ke-ma-asecha, and no one can compare to Your deeds. We know that just as G'd is great, so He is far greater than any other power that seems to possess divine qualities.

ba-elokim a-do-nay, Your *adnut*, authority over anything others call deity, is as absolute as Your *adnut* over man.

11. David asks G'd for guidance that will make his belief independent of the kind of visual evidence through G'd's miracles that the gentiles require. He wants to walk *ba-amitcha* in Your truth. He does not want to depend on a rational approach to the greatness of G'd with both his *yetzer hatov* and his *yetzer hara*. Therefore, he pleads *yached le-vavi* unify my heart. (dual heart). He asks for help to develop faith without proof.

12. Isaiah 43,20, "the wild beast will honour Me... for I provide water in the desert", describes that the animals though only benefiting from the water G'd had provided for Israel, thanked Him. (end of that verse in Isaiah) Similarly, David, aware that G'd's bounty to the body is of secondary nature and is only a spillover of His bounty for the soul, nonetheless expresses his gratitude for all G'd does for his body, *bechol levavi*, with MY heart, i.e. with my body.

13. By teaching me Your ways, You have saved my soul from descent into purgatory.

14. When enemies arise against man, these are basically the

יא הוֹרֵנִי יְהוָה אַהֲלֶךָ בַּאֲמִתֶּךָ יַחֵד לְבָבִי לְיִרְאָה שְׁמֶךָ:
יב אוֹדְךָ אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהַי בְּכָל-לְבָבִי וַאֲכַבְּדָה שִׁמְךָ לְעוֹלָם:
יג כִּי-חַסְדְּךָ גָּדוֹל עָלָי וְהִצַּלְתָּ נַפְשִׁי מִשְּׁאוֹל תַּחְתִּיָּה:
יד אֱלֹהִים זֵדִים קָמוּ עָלַי וַעֲדַת עָרִיצִים בִּקְשׁוּ נַפְשִׁי
וְלֹא שָׂמוּךָ לְנֶגְדָּם:
טו וְאַתָּה אֲדֹנָי אֵל-רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב-חֶסֶד
וֶאֱמֶת:
טז פְּנֵה אֵלַי וְחָנֵּנִי תְּנָה-עֻזְּךָ לְעַבְדֶּךָ וְהוֹשִׁיעָה לְבֶן-
אֲמָתֶךָ:
יז עֲשֵׂה-עִמִּי אוֹת לְטוֹבָה וְיִרְאוּ שֹׂנְאַי וְיֵבֹשׁוּ כִּי-אַתָּה
יְהוָה עֲזַרְתַּנִי וְנִחַמְתָּנִי:

negative forces his sins have created, and which begin to confront him. This celestial phenomenon is repeated in a different guise here on earth. This is what the Psalmist referred to in Psalms 19,14 "also from intentional sins preserve Your servant." This is the only reason a group of ruthless men have risen against me, says David. However, if these people who have arisen against me had in mind to act on Your behalf, I would have remained silent. But they do not have Your name o G'd in mind when they pursue me. *lo samu-cha lenegdam*, they are not mindful of You at all, they act only out of spite and jealousy.

15. David invokes G'd's attribute of mercy to have patience with these people, not to punish them on his account, but

16. rather to display grace towards him to save him from their hands. We have explained that REAL *oz* and *gevurah*, character strength is the ability to suffer without wanting to retaliate. (Yuma 69) David had displayed such restraint when he did not kill Saul though he had the opportunity, and took his spear and water bottle. (Samuel I 26,10–12) Also when Doag and Achitofel had accused him of adultery, (Baba Metzia 59) He did not want to be saved if it meant inflicting harm on those men. He had practiced the same virtue as had Tamar, daughter-in-law of Yehudah, (Genesis 38,25) who had preferred to be burned alive to embarrassing Yehudah publicly.

17. G'd could reply that if David wanted his adversaries to be spared, how would anyone know that David was the righteous one in his confrontation with his enemies? David answers that this can be

87 [2]*Of the Korahites. A psalm. A song.*
The LORD loves the gates of Zion, His foundation on the holy mountains, more than all the dwellings of Jacob.
[3]*Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God.* Selah.
[4]*I mention Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge Me; Philistia, and Tyre, and Cush—each was born there.*

accomplished if G'd performs a sign ***ta-aseh li ot*** – denoting that G'd favours David.

If this were to happen, David's enemies would be shamed, and it would become clear to one and all that G'd had saved David. David himself would be sufficiently comforted by this display of G'd's favour. (compare Isaiah 66,13 "so I will comfort you, you shall find comfort in Jerusalem")

Psalm 87

1. To the extent that this hymn concerns the descendants of Korach, it is both *mizmor*, hymn and *shir*, song. This is explained in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 30 on Psalms 79,1. There the question is posed that the telling of catastrophes which have befallen the Jewish people hardly forms the inspiration for hymns, it should rather inspire *kinot* elegies. The commentator, however, illustrates that a hymn is appropriate, by means of a parable.

A poor woman who went to get water from a well, lost her pail when it fell from her hands into the well. Naturall she began to cry since there was not one who could retrieve the pail for her. A little while later, a princess happened to come by. While the princess looked into the well, a golden necklace fell from her neck into the well. As soon as THAT happened, the poor woman who had lost her pail began to dance with joy. When asked why she suddenly started to dance when only moments before she had wept over the loss of her pail, she explained. Until the princess had come by she had despaired of ever recovering her pail, since no one would bother to climb down the deep well merely to retrieve an inexpensive pail. Now that the well also contained an expensive piece of jewelry, someone would surely climb down, and in the process also retrieve her pail.

The same experience had been undergone by the sons of Korach, who had seen their father descend into the bowels of the earth. Until the gates of the temple descended into the earth also, (Lamentations 2,9) the sons of Korach had not entertained any hope of their father re-emerging in the future. Now they became hopeful however, knowing that the gates of the temple would re-emerge at the time of

פז א לִבְנֵי-קֹרַח שִׁיר יְסוֹדָתוֹ בְּהַרְרֵי-קֹדֶשׁ:
ב אֹהֵב יְהוָה שַׁעֲרֵי צִיּוֹן מִכֹּל מִשְׁכְּנוֹת יַעֲקֹב:
ג נִכְבָּדוֹת מְדֻבָּר בָּךְ עִיר הָאֱלֹהִים סֶלָה:
ד אַזְכִּיר רַהַב וּבָבֶל לְיֹדְעָי הִנֵּה פְלֶשֶׁת וְצוֹר עִם-כּוּשׁ
זֶה יֻלַּד-שָׁם:

redemption. At that time their father would be able to re-emerge also. This is why they saw fit to compose hymns precisely at a time of national catastrophe. In our hymn, the *beney Korach* emphasize G'd's love for the gates of Zion, in that He did not let the gentiles capture them. We know from Lamentations 2,8, that G'd wanted to destroy the walls of Zion, but that the gates sank into the ground.

This reflects the sanctity of the land of Israel. Its gates are dear to G'd. That too is a message of hope to the sons of Korach, encouraging them to believe that their father will be redeemed just like the gates of the temple.

The sons of Korach have two reasons then to compose a hymn and a song, i.e. for the message that the gates will re-emerge in the future, and for the knowledge that what has sunk into the earth can be recovered, their father included. In order that we should not think that the eventual return to the living of their father is more important to them than the restoration of the temple gates, i.e. the restoration of Zion, they begin by extolling G'd's love for the gates.

2. The Psalmist begins by citing G'd's love for the gates of Zion, upon which G'd had displayed greater pity than upon all other sanctuaries of Jacob. This was so because these gates had demonstrated respect for Torah when they opened to admit the holy ark. (Eycha Rabbah 2,13)

3. Zion should not say that if all the holy mountains of Israel are important to G'd, what is its special advantage over them all? The Psalmist therefore makes plain that Zion is in a preferred position. Firstly, when the *nichbadot*, i.e. the souls of the people of Israel are mentioned, they are always mentioned in connection with you Zion. Secondly, Zion remains forever the city of G'd, even after the destruction of the temple. The *Shechinah* never departed from Zion completely.

4. The proof lies in the glorious tales told about Zion. Although Israel had lived in *rahav*, Egypt, for 210 years, (Zohar 1, 198–Rashi on Exodus 12,40), and in Babylonia for 70 years, they did not assimilate so as to become indistinguishable from their host countries during

5*Indeed, it shall be said of Zion, "Every man was born there."*
He, the Most High, will preserve it.
6*The LORD will inscribe in the register of peoples that each was born there.* Selah.
7*Singers and dancers alike [will say]: "All my roots are in You."*

88 *A song. A psalm of the Korahites. For the leader; on* mahalath leannoth. *A* maskil *of Heman the Ezrahite.*

these long periods. The Jews NEVER became referred to as Egyptians or Babylonians.

When other nations are transplanted, they adopt the culture of the host country sooner or later and integrate. If someone has lived in New York for example for a period of 70 years, he considers himself a New Yorker, and is considered so by others. This holds true even if the newcomers brought with them pronounced cultural values and traditions from home. Israel says of itself, that "not only did I not adopt the culture of the Egyptians of Babylonians, countries which possess distinctive cultures, and with whom it is easy to merge, but no one who knows me believes that I have behind me such lengthy residence in foreign countries." Even when the people who are absolute contrasts in looks and culture, such as the Kushites on the one hand who are ugly and uncultured, and the Palestinians on the other hand, live together, after a few generations they become indistinguishable. Anyone born in Zion however, will always remain distinctive. However long a person lives elsewhere, his Zionist origin will always remain recognizable.

5. You could counter that this applies to everyone born there, regardless of whether such a person is Jewish or gentile, since Adam had been formed from the soil of Zion and had been created at the site of the future altar. (Bereshit Rabbah 14,8) In view of this, all mankind shares in the distinction of Zion?

The Psalmist says that there IS a distinction, since *ve-hoo*, i.e. the Israelite who has been born personally in Zion is the one who maintains her elevated status. He contributes to the sanctity of Zion, seeing his soul emanates from the highest regions. This cannot be said of the gentile nations, whose soul emanates from "below", from the spiritual regions called *chitzonim*, exterior, beholden to Satan. Only Israel is associated with Zion, since it originates in celestial Zion which is situated opposite terrestrial Zion.

ה וּלְצִיּוֹן יֵאָמַר אִישׁ וְאִישׁ יֻלַּד-בָּהּ וְהוּא יְכוֹנְנֶהָ
עֶלְיוֹן:
ו יְהוָה יִסְפֹּר בִּכְתוֹב עַמִּים זֶה יֻלַּד-שָׁם סֶלָה:
ז וְשָׁרִים כְּחֹלְלִים כָּל-מַעְיָנַי בָּךְ:

פח א שִׁיר מִזְמוֹר לִבְנֵי-קֹרַח לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל-מַחֲלַת לְעַנּוֹת
מַשְׂכִּיל לְהֵימָן הָאֶזְרָחִי:

6. Not only that, but when on Rosh Hashanah, New Year's day, every human passes under the eyes of G'd to be judged (Rosh Hashanah 16) and is inscribed in one of three books, (ibid.), G'd does not register a Jew as a Jerusalemite only as long as the temple was standing, and as a Babylonian after the destruction (for instance), but *zeh yulad sham selah*, the Jew is always identified with his rightful birthplace, i.e. Zion.

7. The holy spirit responds and says that all this applies not only to the males, but in equal measure to the females. Our sages have explained (Shemot Rabbah 23) on Psalms 68,26, *kidmu sharim achar nognim* – the singers march ahead, the minstrels follow, that the angels had wanted to be the first ones to sing a song of thanksgiving for the crossing by the Israelites of the sea when the Egyptians were drowned. G'd did not want the angels to precede Israel in their song. So, they were allowed to sing only afterwards. In between the male Jews and the angels, the Jewish women had sung and danced, as we know from Exodus 15,20. This shows that G'd considered Jewish women as on a high enough level to give them precedence over the angels. The Psalmist describes all the singers and dancers with the words *kol mayonay boch*, "all of my fountains (roots) are You" You, Israel are viewed by G'd as a single unit when He created them. (it) (Exodus 5,2) At that time He referred to them by only one name "ADAM". Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 41 relates that these *cholelim* are the women who had also said *na-asseh venishmah*, let us do and hear, at the revelation at Mount Sinai.

Psalm 88

1. Most commentators understand also this hymn as addressing itself to the present long and bitter exile. The reason the sons of

2O LORD, God of my deliverance, when I cry out in the night before You,
3let my prayer reach You; incline Your ear to my cry.
4For I am sated with misfortune; I am at the brink of Sheol.
5I am numbered with those who go down to the Pit; I am a helpless man
6abandoned among the dead, like bodies lying in the grave of whom You are mindful no more, and who are cut off from Your care.

Korach begin with the words *mizmor* and *shir* is that their father's resurrection depends on Israel's redemption from this exile, as we have explained based on Eliyahu Rabbah 30.

The weeping about this exile (night) reinforces their hope for the future. It is similar to the laughter of Rabbi Akivah who had burst out laughing when he saw the foxes having their den on the temple Mount. Whereas his companions wept at that spectacle, concentrating on the present condition of the Jewish people, Rabbi Akivah laughed since having seen the dire prophecies fulfilled, he was encouraged in his belief that the prophecies of a more glorious Jewish future would also be fulfilled. The sons of Korach, aware of future forgiveness, i.e. ***machalat***, conclude that it is good to sing psalms when reflecting on the present *innuy*, i.e. ***le-annot***, oppression the Jewish people are suffering. Normally, the Korahites would have acted like the companions of Rabbi Akivah, seeing only the present. However, Heyman the Ezrachi enlightened them, showed them a more positive approach, inspired by ***ruach hakodesh***, holy spirit.

2. Israel speaking to G'd out of the depth of mental depression during this last and seemingly interminable exile, complains about the wonderful miracles G'd had performed for the Jewish people even when they found themselves in former exiles, whereas in this exile G'd does not perform such acts of loving kindness for them. Israel still hopes to become the recipient of such favours though undeserved, since exiles in former times had also not deserved them. As examples, Israel first refers to ***elokay yeshuati***, my G'd my Saviour, a reference to what had occurred while we were in exile in Egypt. At that time G'd had revealed Himself as the 4 lettered attribute, *Hashem*, as the Redeemer. (compare Exodus 14,30 *vayosha HASHEM bayom ha-hoo*, the 4 lettered tetragram acted as Israel's Saviour on THAT day.)

ב יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יְשׁוּעָתִי יוֹם-צָעַקְתִּי בַלַּיְלָה נֶגְדֶּךָ׃
ג תָּבוֹא לְפָנֶיךָ תְּפִלָּתִי הַטֵּה אָזְנְךָ לְרִנָּתִי׃
ד כִּי-שָׂבְעָה בְרָעוֹת נַפְשִׁי וְחַיַּי לִשְׁאוֹל הִגִּיעוּ׃
ה נֶחְשַׁבְתִּי עִם-יוֹרְדֵי בוֹר הָיִיתִי כְּגֶבֶר אֵין-אֱיָל׃
ו בַּמֵּתִים חָפְשִׁי כְּמוֹ חֲלָלִים שֹׁכְבֵי קֶבֶר אֲשֶׁר לֹא-
זְכַרְתָּם עוֹד וְהֵמָּה מִיָּדְךָ נִגְזָרוּ׃

When the Psalmist refers to ***tza-akti balaylah*** I cried out at night, this is a reference to Exodus 14,10 "Israel cried out to G'd" on the night preceding the crossing of the sea. Even though the outcry had seemed directed against G'd rather than to G'd, to wit the sarcastic "were there not enough graves in Egypt that you had to take us to die in the desert"?, it was not treated by G'd as insolent, but He wanted our salvation so intensely that G'd ignored this unseemly outburst. G'd related only to the facts, i.e. my predicament, and "You saved me, employing the tetragrams as the means of salvation". (Exodus 14,11)

3. Now in this terrible exile, may my prayer reach You directly, – not via angels. It deserves to reach You, since my request is that the gates of prayer which have remained closed, be reopened. (Lamentations 3,44) "You have screened Yourself off with a cloud, so that no prayer can pass through". I had already given up praying, but am asking that the gates of prayer be reopened. Should my depression be so great that I have to add ***rinah*** to ***tefillah***, i.e. a more intense form of prayer, do not wait till I approach, but ***hateh oznecha***, precede me by inclining Your ear towards what I am going to say. I cannot look forward to salvation unless You respond to my prayers.

4–5. Even when my soul was filled with misfortune and I had been at the brink of the grave, – when I committed the sin of the golden calf – I had some other recourse, such as the merit of the patriarchs to draw on. Now however, I have ONLY prayer since I have exhausted the merits of the patriarchs long ago.

6. In those days in the desert, I received my freedom from death through the ***meytim***, the dead, i.e. the merit of the patriarchs. (compare Exodus 32,13) Now, however, these ***meytim*** dead, are like ***chalalim***, ordinary bodies, no longer can be called upon to help me. They are like the people in the grave whom no one remembers anymore.

7You have put me at the bottom of the Pit, in the darkest places, in the depths.
8Your fury lies heavy upon me; You afflict me with all Your breakers. Selah.
9You make my companions shun me; You make me abhorrent to them; I am shut in and do not go out.
10My eyes pine away from affliction; I call to You, O LORD, each day; I stretch out my hands to You.
11Do You work wonders for the dead? Do the shades rise to praise You? Selah.

7. You have put me in the bottom of a double pit, i.e. the exile of Babylonia followed by a still darker pit immediately, the exile under the Medes. (Haman) Since the second exile followed the first without interval, the Psalmist describes the *bor* pit, as having two bottoms.

Still, even the "bottoms" had an end. After 70 years, when the second temple was built I saw some light again. However, later during the Greek and Roman exile, I found myself in real dark depths. Most importantly, this last exile is even worse than any of the others. Even though I had not known when the Greek exile would end, it was not nearly as bad as the present exile of which Kohelet Rabbah 12,10 says that G'd had not even revealed the date it would end to His own mouth.

8. I wish I would be in the position of Israel at the time they were in the desert. They had Moses to help ward off Your anger through his personal merit, as we know from Psalms 106,23, "He would have destroyed them had not Moses confronted Him in the breach". Now there is no one who acts as my shield. In the past, You G'd have eventually, i.e. *selah* oppressed all those who tried to break You (through getting at me), *mishbarecha*, i.e. the Egyptians at the sea, or the Babylonians who were conquered by the Persians etc., but now in this exile, there is no one whom You have punished for harming me.

9. In order to understand what follows, we should preface a comment found in Eycha Rabbah 1,23, commenting on Lamentations 1,2, "all her friends and allies have betrayed her". These "friends" are supposed to be the archangels Michael and Gabriel who are called special friends of Israel.

I have said that I had been better off in previous exiles. You might point out that after the first temple was destroyed I had found myself abandoned by these archangels. They had told me prior to the destruction, not to worry, that no enemy would enter Jerusalem, that they would surround Jerusalem with impenetrable walls of water and

ז שַׁתַּנִי בְּבוֹר תַּחְתִּיּוֹת בְּמַחֲשַׁכִּים בִּמְצֻלוֹת:
ח עָלַי סָמְכָה חֲמָתֶךָ וְכָל-מִשְׁבָּרֶיךָ עִנִּיתָ סֶלָה:
ט הִרְחַקְתָּ מְיֻדָּעַי מִמֶּנִּי שַׁתַּנִי תוֹעֵבוֹת לָמוֹ כָּלֻא וְלֹא אֵצֵא:
י עֵינִי דָאֲבָה מִנִּי-עֹנִי קְרָאתִיךָ יְהוָה בְּכָל-יוֹם שִׁטַּחְתִּי אֵילֶיךָ כַּפָּי:
יא הֲלַמֵּתִים תַּעֲשֶׂה-פֶּלֶא אִם-רְפָאִים יָקוּמוּ יוֹדוּךָ סֶלָה:

fire respectively. Gabriel the archangel in charge of fire, had promised a wall of fire, whereas Michael the archangel in charge of water had promised to surround Jerusalem with a deep moat of water. However, G'd had changed the timetable these angels were to be on duty, preventing them from carrying out their promises. In fact, G'd had instructed them to set fire to the temple. (Eycha Rabbati 2,5)

In view of all this, how can Israel claim that the previous exile was so much easier to bear? Therefore, Israel says "it is true that during the previous exile You deprived me of my friends, and even made them burn down the temple, but that exile bothered me only inasmuch as I was imprisoned, i.e. could not escape my exile, i.e. *kolu velo eytze.* However, at least that experience left me in high esteem by the host country, whose princes were anxious to intermarry with me.

10. In this exile, however, my eyes are pining away from afflictions; even so, despite the lowly state I have come to, I do not feel that You relate to us with Your attribute of justice, but with the attribute of mercy. This is why we have called out to Your attribute *hashem* every day. We did NOT appeal to *elokim* to prove that we believe You are being merciful with us. We believe that You G'd cause pain in order to demonstrate that You will also bandage the wound and cure it. You are NOT like a human who inflicts pain without bothering to attend to the wounds he has caused.

We do not hold the enemy responsible for our pitiful state, expecting him to compensate us. Nor do we feel that our fate is due to *mazzal* etc. We call on You every day because we are convinced that our condition is due exclusively to Your will. Therefore, our appeal is ONLY to You."

11. Why did I ask only for bread, and not also to be saved from death by the sword etc.? The reason is simply that surely G'd would not perform miracles for those who will soon be consigned to death!

12*Is Your faithful care recounted in the grave, Your constancy in the place of perdition?*
13*Are Your wonders made known in the netherworld, Your beneficent deeds in the land of oblivion?*
14*As for me, I cry out to You, O LORD; each morning my prayer greets You.*
15*Why, O LORD, do You reject me, do You hide Your face from me?*
16*From my youth I have been afflicted and near death; I suffer Your terrors wherever I turn.*

If You provide bread, surely it is only for those who are expected to live. You will save me from death as a corollary of providing me with bread!

12. Why did I not choose to die from hunger and be released from all my problems since the dead are free? The reason is that I cannot tell about Your acts of loving kindness once I am dead etc. It is true that the righteous do not lose out by being in their graves, since G'd can deal with them miraculously even while they are in their graves. Even while there, they can experience satisfactions. We know this from the story of Rabbi Achi bar Yoshia, (Shabbat 152) whose grave had been disturbed by grave diggers and who had protested their digging. The lips of the dead – on occasion – are not sealed even when in their graves, and according to that Tanna, anyone who did not envy someone else during their lifetime, will not experience decomposition of his body.

Conversely, those consigned to purgatory are also allowed to praise the Lord while in purgatory. This is what is meant by *emunatcha be-abdan*, Your faithfulness even while experiencing destruction.

Korach and companions are reputed to proclaim constantly "Moses is true, his Torah is true and G'd's justice is true". (Tanchumah Korach 11)

Even though G'd will be acknowledged by those in purgatory, this does not spread His fame on earth! It is better then not to want to die to gain relief, be it as a *tzaddik* or as a *rasha*.

13. The same considerations apply to this lengthy stay in exile. Are Your wonderful deeds becoming known when we keep being in exile, in the dark? Who will realize Your charity while we are in a land of oblivion? Only when the light of morning, i.e. the redemption comes, will Your deeds of clemency become known! (Isaiah 60,1 expresses this thought)

יג הֲיִוָּדַע בַּחֹשֶׁךְ פִּלְאֶךָ וְצִדְקָתְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ נִשְׁיָה׃
יד וַאֲנִי אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה שִׁוַּעְתִּי וּבַבֹּקֶר תְּפִלָּתִי תְקַדְּמֶךָּ׃
טו לָמָה יְהוָה תִּזְנַח נַפְשִׁי תַּסְתִּיר פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי׃
טז עָנִי אֲנִי וְגוֹעַ מִנֹּעַר נָשָׂאתִי אֵמֶיךָ אָפוּנָה׃

14. I have something else to add, continues the body. Why do you my soul complain about me when all my efforts were designed to ensure your happiness and all my prayers day and night were directed at my Maker, asking Him not to distance Himself from my soul after it enters purgatory.? After all, what can he grant ME in this world other than to save my soul! This is the meaning of "I prayed to You, and also in the morning my prayers welcome You". I do not ask favours for myself, only for the sake of my soul.

15. I ask only why You G'd would forsake my soul and hide Your face from me? Surely, the afflictions suffered by me, the body, can atone for the errors of my soul!

16. After all, the worst affliction man can be subjected to is poverty. Our sages (Nedarim 7) consider a poor man as equivalent to a dead man, and the verse in Leviticus 26,26 "I will break your staff of bread..When you will eat you will not become satisfied" is considered the culmination of all the afflictions listed in that passage of the Torah! (Tanchuma Mishpatim 11)

The reason is that as a poor man, one is considered dead all the time! The Psalmist says "I have been deathlike since youth, i.e. *gove-a mi-no-ar*. Still, I do not express disgust at this state of affairs, but *nassati eymecha* I suffered from Your terrors wherever I turn, i.e. *afunah*. I realize that Your *tzedek* is great since You have inflicted Your afflictions upon me gradually, piecemeal, so as to give me the strength to bear them. *charon* is more intense than *eymah*. By learning first how to cope with *eymecha*, I was prepared at a later dat to cope with *charonecha*. (verse 17)

The Psalmist says that first he suffered only the FEAR of *tzarot*, troubles, having heard about them, preparing himself for them, i.e. *afunah*. However, due to G'd's grace, he suffered ONLY the fear, not the actual *tzarot*.

17. Subsequently, I underwent more severe *charonecha*, not just the tales of terror, i.e. *eymecha*. Those I did not only hear about, but experienced them. Fortunately, they did not cleave to me

17 *Your fury overwhelms me; Your terrors destroy me.*
18 *They swirl about me like water all day long; they encircle me on every side.*
19 *You have put friend and neighbor far from me and my companions out of my sight.*

89 *A* maskil *of Ethan the Ezrahite.*

permanently, but *avru bi*, passed by me quickly. They were so intense however, that through my brief experience with them Your terror made me rigid. Had they not "passed me", but penetrated to my core, they would have destroyed me, I would not have been able to tolerate them, would have died immediately.

18. After THAT stage, Your afflictions surrounded me like water all day long. Though I was totally immersed in swirling waters, I was able to tolerate this, it did not make me rigid with terror as had *bi-utecha*. I had meanwhile gotten used to these experiences.

19. Afterwards You removed these *yissurim*, afflictions from me, which I had become used to view as "friends" and "companions" offering me a chance of atonement. This is similar to what Rabbi Eleazar son of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai had said in Baba Metzia 84. He welcomed the daily afflictions as friends and felt deprived at their departure. As long as he had suffered these afflictions, says the Psalmist, he had acquired merit. When no longer afflicted, he feels as if darkness descends upon him. The metaphor describes the incentive to perform G'd's commandments and good deeds. When afflictions are removed, so is the incentive to behave in the optimal manner possible.

Psalm 89

1. Our sages have accepted the tradition that Eytan is identical with Abraham (Vayikra Rabbah 9,1 – Baba Batra 15) because *ha-ezrachi* is a reference to *mizrach*, East, and G'd had awakened him to come from the East as we read in Isaiah 41,2, to acquaint mankind with the truth about their Creator.

He implanted in people's minds the knowledge of the existence of an invisible G'd who supervises man's fate, created the universe, and dispenses reward and imposes retribution. Abraham dispensed kindness to all and sundry, and implanted the seeds of faith in G'd in the minds of all those who he had played host to.

Bereshit Rabbah 43,7, describes that when Abraham set the table

יז עָלַי עָבְרוּ חֲרוֹנֶיךָ בִּעוּתֶיךָ צִמְּתֻתוּנִי׃
יח סַבּוּנִי כַמַּיִם כָּל-הַיּוֹם הִקִּיפוּ עָלַי יָחַד׃
יט הִרְחַקְתָּ מִמֶּנִּי אֹהֵב וָרֵעַ מְיָדָעַי מַחְשָׁךְ׃

פט א מַשְׂכִּיל לְאֵיתָן הָאֶזְרָחִי׃

for his guests, he would invite them to thank their host before partaking of the meal. He would explain that the guests were not really his guests, but were guests of G'd, since the whole earth and all that is therein belongs to G'd, seeing He has created it. By means of this Abraham wanted to demonstrate that the whole universe is built on loving kindness, (verse 3) since G'd certainly had not needed to create the universe for His own benefit. He had, however, decided to forestall the question that if G'd did not NEED the universe, why did He bother to create it?

The Talmud Baba Batra 16, relates that Abraham had a pearl hanging around his throat, and that anyone who looked at it would be healed. After Abraham's death, G'd hung the pearl in the sun's orbit. What our sages have in mind by telling us this story is that as long as Abraham was alive, he proclaimed the existence of the Almighty with his throat, and thereby enlightened the whole of mankind. He had been able to convince the people of the truth of his belief in a personal G'd.

After he died, people had to derive that faith from observing the regularity of the planetary system (the sun), and conclude that its motions were masterminded by a supreme intelligence who had created them all.

Abraham's faith had itself been inspired through observing the sun orbit. (Zohar 1,86) When he first saw the tremendous impact of the sun on all forms of life on earth, Abraham had wondered if the sun could be the overlord of the moon. When he saw the sun set, to be replaced by the inferior light of the moon, he realized he had been wrong. Observing the predictability with which the sun and planets orbit, he realized that they must have been programmed, and that whoever programmed them was the true Master of the universe. This is what the Talmud had in mind when it said that after Abraham died, G'd suspended the pearl in the solar orbit. Once Abraham had explained the fundamentals of his belief, it was sufficient to REMIND people when they looked at the sun. There was no need for a

2I will sing of the LORD's steadfast love forever; to all generations I will proclaim Your faithfulness with my mouth.
3I declare, "Your steadfast love is confirmed forever; there in the heavens You establish Your faithfulness."
4"I have made a covenant with My chosen one; I have sworn to My servant David:
5I will establish your offspring forever, I will confirm your throne for all generations." Selah.
6Your wonders, O LORD, are praised by the heavens, Your faithfulness, too, in the assembly of holy beings.

second Abraham, i.e. the pearl did not have to be bequeathed to say Isaac or Jacob.

2. Abraham says that he had thought that he would continue his work *ledor dor* also in the second generation, i.e. the generation that would grow up at the time his sons would grow up, *befi*, i.e. personally, "with the pearl around his throat".

3. My message was that G'd built the universe out of considerations of love for those whom He created. Abraham wonders who will continue to preach the message after his death. – It can be none other than the sky, through which You have demonstrated Your faithfulness, i.e. through the regular orbits of the sun the moon etc.

4. Having said that G'd created the universe in order to deal lovingly with all its inhabitants, the question of Israel being G'd's favorite may be raised, since G'd had said "Israel is my first born son". (Exodus 4,22) Where then is G'd's kindness, when Israel is pining away in bitter exile?

Not only that, but the EARTH has been cursed in 6 different ways since the sin of Adam! (Bereshit Rabbah 12,6) The curse extends to man's appearance, life span, height, earth's produce, fruit of the trees and the light bodies. (i.e. reduced output) All this we know because the word *toldot* is spelled with both letters *vav* only in Genesis 2,4, (i.e. before the fall) and when referring to the descendants of Peretz in Ruth 4,18, (i.e. when referring to the Messiah's origin). Every other time the word *toldot*, consequences, descendants appears, it lacks at least one letter *vav*, suggesting it is incomplete. It means that between the time Adam had sinned and the advent of the Messiah, the universe does not operate at full capacity, so to speak.

The holy spirit here refers to G'd's guarantee that the withholding of G'd's full measure of kindness to His creatures is not of permanent

ב חַסְדֵי יְהוָה עוֹלָם אָשִׁירָה לְדֹר וָדֹר אוֹדִיעַ אֱמוּנָתְךָ
בְּפִי:
ג כִּי-אָמַרְתִּי עוֹלָם חֶסֶד יִבָּנֶה שָׁמַיִם תָּכִן אֱמוּנָתְךָ
בָהֶם:
ד כָּרַתִּי בְרִית לִבְחִירִי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְדָוִד עַבְדִּי:
ה עַד-עוֹלָם אָכִין זַרְעֶךָ וּבָנִיתִי לְדֹר-וָדוֹר כִּסְאֶךָ סֶלָה:
ו וְיוֹדוּ שָׁמַיִם פִּלְאֶךָ יְהוָה אַף-אֱמוּנָתְךָ בִּקְהַל קְדֹשִׁים:

duration, and that He had confirmed this by a covenant for the sake of His servant David.

5. The guarantee is that David's descendants would never cease to exist, and there would be a throne waiting in readiness for David to occupy it from generation to generation. Once the Messiah would arrive, G'd's visible kindness will never again be interrupted. All the benefits that had been removed through Adam's sin will return to earth and remain available without further interruption.

6. In order to understand this verse, we must remember a story told in the Zohar 1,9. A gentile once quoted scripture, i.e. Jeremiah 10,7 "amongst all the sages in the world, none can compare to You" (G'd). He asked whether the implication of that verse was that amongst the Jewish sages there were some that were comparable to G'd? He was told that such was not the case, of course. The prophet's meaning is that none of the sages of the gentiles are entrusted by G'd with the performance of miracles, whereas G'd does perform miracles by means of Jewish sages on occasion. What gentile sage has ever successfully tried to arrest the orbit of the sun and moon, as did Joshua? (Joshua 10,12) Which gentile has ever commanded vinegar to turn into fuel, and burn like oil as did Jewish sages? (Taanit 25) This is because the ***tzaddik*** rules the world, i.e. G'd carries out the ***tzaddik***'s desires.

Not only that, but when an angel attempts to perform a miracle which has not been specifically authorized by heaven, his orders to nature would go unheeded, whereas the Jewish ***tzaddik*** does not need to check with G'd when he feels that a miracle is called for. Scripture is full of examples proving this.

Now to our verse. The Psalmist explains that 1) the skies praise G'd's miracles, i.e. because Your faithfulness is demonstrated in the assembly of saintly people. This means that the fact that nature accepts orders to change its norms when such orders are issued by

7For who in the skies can equal the LORD, can compare with the LORD among the divine beings,
8a God greatly dreaded in the council of holy beings, held in awe by all around Him?
9O LORD, God of hosts, who is mighty like You, O LORD?
Your faithfulness surrounds You;

saintly Jewish people, is proof that nature itself is controlled by G'd, and that G'd had made a covenant with nature not to oppose the efforts of such men to make temporary changes.

We read in Midrash Tanchuma Acharey 9, that when Joshua bade the sun stand still (remain silent) thereby to arrest its orbit, the sun asked why a senior servant of G'd should accept orders form His junior servant? It meant that seeing it had been created on the fourth day of creation, why should a creature that was not created till the sixth day be able to give it order? Had G'd not granted this special privilege to the Jewish sages, the sun could certainly have refused to take orders from Joshua! Your faithfulness O G'd can be seen then in the way Your *kehal kedoshim*, saintly groups of people, are allowed to operate.

7. After all this, there is no proof yet that G'd had also created the host of angels, and that they are His to command. The Psalmist says that this is proven by the fact that those in *shachak*, the lowest heavenly region housing angels, cannot interfere with anything G'd has arranged in this world, nor can they do anything that can compare with His deeds.

On the other hand, amongst the *beney eylim*, the descendants of those called *el*, i.e. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, there are those who have comparable powers, i.e. *yidmeh lo*. Who are these people? Jews who have reached a certain spiritual level. If the angels cannot even match Israel in their ability to bring about changes in the laws of nature, (without authority), surely this proves that they too are subservient to G'd!

8. Another proof of the superiority of *tzaddikim* over angels is found in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, chapter 4 where the trembling and consternation of the angels is described when they make ready to acknowledge G'd as "Holy Holy Holy" – not even knowing where the essence of His holiness is to be found, and in which direction to address Him!

This is in contrast with the *tzaddikim*, who though carriers of the *Shechinah*, i.e. forming the *merkavah* i.e. in a closer relationship to

ז כִּי מִי בַשַּׁחַק יַעֲרֹךְ לַיהוָה יִדְמֶה לַיהוָה בִּבְנֵי אֵלִים:
ח אֵל נַעֲרָץ בְּסוֹד-קְדֹשִׁים רַבָּה וְנוֹרָא עַל-כָּל-סְבִיבָיו:
ט יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת מִי-כָמוֹךָ חָסִין יָהּ וֶאֱמוּנָתְךָ סְבִיבוֹתֶיךָ:

G'd than the angels, do not lose their composure when proclaiming G'd's holiness. Abraham himself, as the *merkavah* carrier of G'd's *Shechinah*, is on record as saying (Genesis 18,3) "do not pass by Your servant", i.e. "I am Your *merkavah*". G'd waited, as we know, since Abraham FIRST attended to his guests who were dressed in human garb, and saw them off. The Divine Presence remained with him until he had finished pleading for Sodom, or at least the righteous people who could be rescued from there. (Genesis 18,33) Abraham never lost his composure during the entire episode. Neither had he done so before he had been circumcised when G'd had talked to him. (Genesis 17,22)

All this, when G'd was immediately above him, whereas the angels are gripped by fear even when merely speaking anywhere in His presence.

The reason for man's superiority lies in the fact that his soul is part of the g'dhead. This not the case with the angels. When man confronts G'd therefore, there is a meeting of elements that have something in common. Such a meeting does not create tension. The meeting between the angels and G'd, being one between totally different elements, does produce tension. Hence the angels are in turmoil and trembling. (compare this editor's translation of the author's Torat Moshe page 18 for more detail)

9. In view of the fact that it sounds more reasonable for a totally spiritual force such as G'd to have His domain exclusively amongst totally spiritual beings, the fact that man sounds incredulous when informed that G'd's domain is on this murky earth in at least equal measure, is understandable.

Man might have concluded that whatever part of Divine Presence manifests itself on earth, is not of G'd's essence. To reassure us that G'd has many facets, that He can be equally as well as simultaneously at home in the heavens and on earth, i.e. *mi kamocha chassin "yo-oh"* who is like You o G'd combining the terrestrial i.e. *heh* and the celestial i.e. *yud*!

Informing the world of Your faithfulness is the demonstration that You exercise Your sovereignty both in the heavens and on earth.

[10]You rule the swelling of the sea; when its waves surge, You still them.
[11]You crushed Rahab; he was like a corpse; with Your powerful arm You scattered Your enemies.
[12]The heaven is Yours, the earth too; the world and all it holds— You established them.
[13]North and south— You created them; Tabor and Hermon sing forth Your name.

sevivotecha, is the reference to what is outside the spiritual centre, i.e. the terrestrial, the physical.

10. *gey-ut hayam* is a reference to the *saro shel mayim*, the "prince", the forces designated by heaven to be responsible for all the waters. *atta moshel*, – You are the ruler over that force. At the time Israel crossed the sea, the Torah does not say (Exodus 14,21) that "G'd split the waters", but the Torah says "the waters were split", meaning that all over the world, for all to see, the waters were split as a demonstration of who is really in charge. (Shemot Rabbah 21,6 – also Mechilta ibid.)

That experience taught mankind that even *beso galav* when its waves surge, it is You G'd who in the final analysis calms them, i.e. *teshabchem*. He who is in charge of the spiritual force in charge of water, also controls the physical waters.

11. There had been a similar demonstration when You subdued the spiritual patron of Egypt = Rahav; he was like a corpse, *challal*. The Torah did NOT describe Israel as seeing the "Egyptians (MITZRIIM) (pl) *meytim* plural for "dead", but the Torah says "Israel saw Mitzrayim *meyt* the patron spirit of Egypt dead (singular) on the beach of the sea. (Exodus 14,30) That patron spirit is called *mitzrayim*. He appeared to Israel as if he had been slain and had become a corpse.

The second half of our verse, reporting G'd as scattering His enemies, refers to the generation who built the tower of Babel. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer chapter 24 explains that the 70 patrons for the 70 nations were assigned to them at that time by lottery, G'd Himself drawing Abraham. (who according to the same chapter had requested from G'd that He separate these builders of the tower by confusing their languages)

The Torah refers to this again in Deuteronomy 32,8 "when the Most High gave the nations their homes and set the division of man". By displaying Egypt's patron as a corpse, G'd demonstrates that He is supreme over all the nations' patrons He had appointed at the time

י אַתָּה מוֹשֵׁל בְּגֵאוּת הַיָּם בְּשׂוֹא גַלָּיו אַתָּה תְשַׁבְּחֵם:
יא אַתָּה דִכִּאתָ כֶחָלָל רָהַב בִּזְרוֹעַ עֻזְּךָ פִּזַּרְתָּ אוֹיְבֶיךָ:
יב לְךָ שָׁמַיִם אַף-לְךָ אָרֶץ תֵּבֵל וּמְלֹאָהּ אַתָּה יְסַדְתָּם:
יג צָפוֹן וְיָמִין אַתָּה בְרָאתָם תָּבוֹר וְחֶרְמוֹן בְּשִׁמְךָ יְרַנֵּנוּ:

the tower was built, therefore He can remove him from that influential position. Since the patrons' field of action is in the celestial regions, by humbling them You demonstrated who is supreme in those celestial regions!

12. Since You are supreme on earth as well as in the celestial spheres, it goes without saying that You are supreme in whatever is between heaven and earth.

13. We need to understand why the Psalmist had to mention *tzafon veyamin*, North and right (South), since, if G'd had created the universe and all that is within it, it is clear that He had also created North and South.

He obviously had also created both Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon. Why belabour the point then? Why are East and West not mentioned as having been created by G'd? Why are ONLY the mountains Tabor and Hermon singled out for mention? Why does the Psalmist describe North and South as *bera-tam* You have CREATED them, whereas of the mountains he says merely "they sing Your name"?

It is a fact that the anger of G'd is usually associated with *tzafon*, North, as we know from Jeremiah 1,14 "disaster will originate out of the North", whereas G'd's attribute of kindness is associated with the concept *yemin*, Right. There is a place on earth which relates to the negative attribute "North", which is deprived of G'd's bounty, good, as is the case in the arctic Northern regions which are described by our sages as being like *tohu*, waste. (Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer chapter 3)

We read there that the reason G'd left the Northern extremities of the earth so cold and barren is so that anyone claiming to be a deity should be told to prove his claim by converting that region into one filled with lush vegetation to match the rest of the globe.

On the other hand, there is a spot on earth in which G'd's blessings are more abundant than anywhere else, and that region is called *yemin*, Right. It is these aspects of North and South that the Psalmist refers to. North symbolizes evil, South symbolizes good. Since people could think that each of those domains has a different

14 *Yours is an arm endowed with might; Your hand is strong; Your right hand, exalted.*
15 *Righteousness and justice are the base of Your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness stand before You.*

Creator, why else are they so different from one another, the Psalmist affirms that the SAME G'd has created them both.

Abraham gives the lie to those who conclude from the fact that the earth contains paradoxical phenomena that it could not have been the work of one and the same creative power. This is the reason he emphasizes that both Tabor, i.e. a symbol of lush vegetation, and Hermon, a mountain covered by eternal snow, barren, pay homage to the same Creator. We know that Hermon is a symbol of such barrenness from Deut. 3,9, in which the Sidonians are reported as calling that mountain Snir, i.e. eternally snowclad. Surely, – seeing that in terms of distance Tabor and Hermon are quite close to one another, – no one would claim that they had been created by different Creators!

At Mount Tabor, G'd had delivered Siserah's army into the hands of the Israelites, (Judges 4,14) and Devorah had sung G'd's praises, saying "I will sing to the Lord". (Judges 5,3)

Similarly, according to Berachot 54, the Emorites who owned an area from wadi Arnon to Mount Hermon had been hiding out in mountain clefts waiting to ambush the Israelites passing below and between them. The presence of the holy ark which preceded the Israelites on their journeys, caused G'd to perform a miracle and to telescope projecting rocks from one side of the mountain into the caves in the opposite mountains in which the Emorites lay in ambush, thus squashing the Emorites to death. Israel never even knew of this until it saw the waters of the river Arnon flow red with blood. At that time, Israel thanked the Lord (Numbers 21,14) "therefore the book of the Lord's war speaks of etc." (compare Bamidbar Rabbah 19,25 on *az yashir yisrael* Numbers 21,17.) The wars in which Israel as an army was not involved at all, all the ACTION being conducted by G'd, are summed up in *sefer milchamot Hashem*, the book of the wars G'd has waged.

Had Mount Hermon been the domain of another deity, it is inconceivable that such a deity would not at least have opposed Israel taking possession of its territory, and would have tried to protect those who inhabited its domain.

14. Normally, the king's function in war is to lend courage and moral support to his troops by his presence amongst the warriors. The actual fighting however, is done by the soldiers. In Your case O

יד לְךָ זְרוֹעַ עִם-גְּבוּרָה תָּעֹז יָדְךָ תָּרוּם יְמִינֶךָ:
טו צֶדֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט מְכוֹן כִּסְאֶךָ חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת יְקַדְּמוּ פָנֶיךָ:

G'd, You do not NEED the arm (i.e. the army) of a nation, i.e. *zeroa* in order for the enemy to fall through the MORAL support You lend. You Yourself are *zeroa*, i.e. the army as well as the *gevurah*, martial spirit. You battle Israel's wars without their armies even having been involved. They are NOT EVEN the executive arm, i.e. *zeroa* as it was at Tabor, when neither shield nor spear was seen in action, (Judges 5,8), when men who simply walked along the way were victorious.

Similarly, at Hermon, – G'd defeated the Emorite singlehandedly from the Arnon river to *eshed hanechalim*, (Numbers 21,15) without the armies of Israel having been involved.

The term *zeroa* when used in connection with G'd always refers to the left arm, i.e. the "NORTH" the attribute of justice and anger.

Had there been a confrontation between two opposing deities, one representing the "left" and the other the "right", then this could not have been described as *ta-oz yadcha*, Your left hand was mighty, *tarim yemincha* You raised Your right hand, but one of the two should have been described as belonging to the opposing deity; or, ONLY G'd's *yemin*, right hand should have been mentioned, seeing it prevailed.

Or, – *ta-oz yadcha* – when You employ Your left arm carrying out justice, – *tarum yemincha* Your right arm is raised in the esteem of the nations, as happened when You drowned the Egyptians at which time You had said *be-hikovdi bepharoh.... veyadu mitzrayim ki ani hashem*, when I deal severely with Pharaoh.... the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord. (Exodus 14,18)

15. *tzedek* and *mishpat* are virtues that need to be practiced side by side, as are *chessed* and *emet*. The former form Your *kisseh*, throne, whereas the latter precede You, herald Your coming. In either event, YOU are He who practices all these virtues, there is no other independent Power, deity.

16. Even though I am aware that I have no right to ask this, since Israel has to prepare the *kisseh*, throne, for You before it can expect Your Presence, Your joining it like a groom, these people are to be hailed even while they know only the *teruah*, the tremor inspiring sound of the *shofar*, ram's horn. This causes humility within their hearts, inspiring them to observe the Torah out of poverty. They will then practice justice tempered with righteousness, i.e. *tzedek umishpat*.

This will prepare them to observe the Torah also once they have

16Happy is the people who know the joyful shout; O LORD, they walk in the light of Your presence.
17They rejoice in Your name all day long; they are exalted through Your righteousness.
18For You are their strength in which they glory; our horn is exalted through Your favor.
19Truly our shield is of the LORD, our king, of the Holy One of Israel.

been granted Your *chessed verachamim* G'd's bountiful generosity which will make rich in material possessions.

This is what Rabbi Jonathan said in Avot 4,9 "anyone who observes Torah though being poor, can trust himself to continue observing Torah even when he has become rich". An initial dose of poverty in one' life, is a great opportunity to build one's character.

If one starts out in life wealthy, there is always the danger that the very possession of material goods tends to make one feel that one does not need to keep Torah laws.

If THAT becomes the reason one neglects Torah, then even a dose of poverty will not suffice to put such a person on the right path. He will then neglect Torah, pleading that his poverty does not give him the time and opportunity to keep it.

Abraham therefore asks *chessed verachamim yekadmu panecha*, that G'd should not hide His face pending Israel making its contribution. When G'd's *hashgachah*, Personal Providence, is not noticeable, i.e. there is *hester panim*, the tendency to seek out other visible symbols, idols, becomes stronger. This is what Kohelet says in Eccles. 12,5 *ki holech haadam el beyt olamo*, that man has a tendency to seek out his individual *olam*, world, outlook. All our progress in this world is towards the world of the hereafter. Absence of G'd's visible Personal Providence slows man's progress towards the world of the hereafter since it stirs within him doubts about G'd.

If You G'd however, light up his path, *be-or panecha* with the light of Your visible Presence, i.e. with *chessed* and *rachamim*, his hands and feet will propel him along the path to his true destiny.

16B. Since Eytan, i.e. Abraham had explained at the outset of the hymn that *chessed* and *emet* are not going to be at home on earth until the coming of the Messiah, and that therefore he appeals for David's i.e. the Messiah's coming soon, Abraham faces the same predicament that Israel faced when it asked the prophet Samuel for a king. (Samuel I 10,18–19)

The prophet had reacted angrily by saying "how can you ask for a

טז אַשְׁרֵי הָעָם יֹדְעֵי תְרוּעָה יְהוָה בְּאוֹר-פָּנֶיךָ יְהַלֵּכוּן׃
יז בְּשִׁמְךָ יְגִילוּן כָּל-הַיּוֹם וּבְצִדְקָתְךָ יָרוּמוּ׃
יח כִּי-תִפְאֶרֶת עֻזָּמוֹ אָתָּה וּבְרְצוֹנְךָ תָּרִים קַרְנֵנוּ׃
יט כִּי לַיהוָה מָגִנֵּנוּ וְלִקְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל מַלְכֵּנוּ׃

human king, are you not rejecting G'd as your king by doing so? Similarly, Abraham could be accused of belittling G'd when he asks Him to appoint a Messiah as king over Israel now? Had G'd Himself not been Israel's *or panecha* when Israel came out of Egypt? (Exodus 13,21 – "G'd walked before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a column of fire by night to give them light etc.")

To ward off any such accusations, Abraham says "I am aware

that the people who know the sound of the *teruah* are truly blessed because they walk in the light of Your countenance".

17. There are those who ask for a king because the king dispenses gifts of clothing etc. spoils from successfully concluded wars. (Samuel II 1,24)

Others want a king to bask in the reflection of his glory if he makes a great name for himself in wars etc.

All these advantages would accrue to Israel in an even greater measure, if ONLY G'd were their king, and they did not have a human ruler at their helm. Surely, a LITTLE of G'd's bounty far excels anything even the greatest king could offer!

18. An additional reason for wanting a human king, namely that he should lead the nation in war, inspire its armies etc., is also inadequate justification for spurning G'd as our king, since the true strength one glories in is Yours, anyways. After all, any king of flesh and blood only draws on Your strength, so why not draw on G'd's strength directly? Why should Israel pray for a human ruler? All of these reasons could be advanced by G'd against Israel for having a human king INCLUDING the Messiah! All we should strive for is Your kingship on earth!

19. Abraham now explains that the desire for a human *melech hamashiach*, king Messiah, is not in any way intended to denigrate G'd's kingship. On the contrary, the king of flesh and blood should serve as the very model of how to place all one's faith and trust in G'd. The greater said king's reliance on You G'd, – the more closely he is associated with G'd i.e. *kedosh Yisrael*, the more will we regard Him as *malkeynu*, our KING. In other words, You o G'd are our principal king, as ever; to the extent the king inspires us to serve You,

20*Then You spoke to Your faithful ones in a vision and said, "I have conferred power upon a warrior; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.*
21*I have found David, My servant; anointed him with My sacred oil.*
22*My hand shall be constantly with him, and My arm shall strengthen him.*
23*No enemy shall oppress him, no vile man afflict him.*

– he performs an enormously useful function. This is the only reason we pray for the arrival of the *melech hamashiach.*

20. Then, after Abraham had asked G'd to raise "our horn", i.e. to elevate us by sending us the Messiah as the king who represents G'd 's kingdom on earth, and who would demonstrate that the world is indeed built on *chessed*, he adds that he did not ask anything from G'd that is not G'd's desire anyways.

On the contrary, You G'd Yourself were anxious to hasten the arrival of the Messiah while Saul was still reigning over Israel.

Since, in spite of the principle that "one kingdom should not encroach on another by the smallest iota", (Berachot 48) You told Your prophet Samuel in a vision when You sent him to anoint Saul "I have given assistance to one who is mighty, i.e. Saul who was a head and shoulders taller than any of his contemporaries (Samuel I 9,2), You instructed Samuel to anoint David, this proves that the desire to hasten the advent of the Messiah is quite legitimate. At the time Samuel had told Saul that he would become *ish acher*, a different person after he had been inspired by the holy spirit. (Samuel I 10,6) This was the person of whom Samuel had been told first that Kish had a son who was "choice and good". (Samuel I 9,2)

21. Despite all the natural good qualities of Saul which You had told Samuel about, You told Samuel later "here I have found My servant David", i.e. though Saul is a righteous person, I have found for Myself David as serving Me better than he, for I have never found that I could apply the title "My servant" to Saul. This is a title reserved for David. Therefore I have anointed him with My holy oil".

The Talmud (Ketuvot 6) concludes from this statement that whereas Saul had been anointed with parsimmon oil, David was anointed with the oil of anointing specified in Exodus 30,23–25.

At any rate, our verse emphasizes that EVEN WHILE Saul was king, G'd had already appointed David to be his successor. Shemot Rabbah 2,2, explains that G'd had tested David's suitability to shepherd His flock, by the way David shepherded his father's flock.

כ אָז דִּבַּרְתָּ-בְחָזוֹן לַחֲסִידֶיךָ וַתֹּאמֶר שִׁוִּיתִי עֵזֶר עַל-
גִּבּוֹר הֲרִימוֹתִי בָחוּר מֵעָם:
כא מָצָאתִי דָוִד עַבְדִּי בְּשֶׁמֶן קָדְשִׁי מְשַׁחְתִּיו:
כב אֲשֶׁר יָדִי תִּכּוֹן עִמּוֹ אַף-זְרוֹעִי תְאַמְּצֶנּוּ:
כג לֹא-יַשִּׁיא אוֹיֵב בּוֹ וּבֶן-עַוְלָה לֹא יְעַנֶּנּוּ:

He had excelled in mercy, considerateness. Anyone who displays such concern for the animals, would certainly express concern for his human subjects.

At any rate, G'd did not wait till the end of Saul's reign, but anointed David as soon as He had found him worthy. Samuel used a *keren*, horn to anoint him from, not merely a *pach*, cruse, as the Talmud Megillah 14 is at pains to point out. (contrast Samuel I 10,1 with Samuel I 16,13)

22. It is a well known fact that G'd is omnipotent, and that His desire is to give of His bounty, and that the righteous are the conduits through whom He channels His blessings upon us. On the other hand, the wicked weaken this power of G'd to bestow blessings, G'd forbid, as we know from Deuteronomy 32,18 *tzur yeladcha teshi*, you have weakened the Rock which begot you. On the other hand, *tzaddikim* increase this power of G'd as we know from Michah 3,8 "I am filled with strength by the spirit of the Lord". The interplay between the deeds of the *tzaddikim* and the largesse of G'd can best be understood by a parable.

We know that a baby derives its nourishment from the mother's breast. We also know that a mother's supply of milk dries up quickly when she does not nurse a baby. It follows that the very act of drawing milk from a mother's breast is what replenishes the supply of milk. The *tzaddik* drawing down G'd's blessings, reinforces and replenishes the reservoir of those blessings, i.e. *af zero-i te-amtzenu*, you also strengthen My arm. The choice of the word *zeroa* instead of *yad* indicates that the *tzaddik* can even convert the attribute of justice to become such a source of blessings.

23. It is well known (Berachot 33) that if someone is killed by a venomous snake, it was not the venom that killed, but his sins, the guilt of the victim. Anyone free from guilt need not fear the attack of tens of thousands who confront him. We also know (Zohar 3,83) that when man experiences troubles and disaster, they are nothing but his sins which created these negative forces. In other words, his very

24I will crush his adversaries before him; I will strike down those who hate him.
25My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him; his horn shall be exalted through My name.
26I will set his hand upon the sea, his right hand upon the rivers.
27He shall say to Me, 'You are my father, my God, the rock of my deliverance.'
28I will appoint him first-born, highest of the kings of the earth.

sins are what oppress him, as the prophet (Isaiah 64,6) explains "You made us melt by our sins".

Since G'd had said that also His *zeroa*, i.e. the attribute of justice will strengthen David, He now answers the unspoken question that this seems impossible since the attribute of justice's function is to punish, to inflict afflictions etc. G'd answers that those two are a SUPPORT for him, in order to cleanse him of all sins when he will become Messiah.

Therefore, now no enemy will triumph over David. The enemy referred to is Satan, the evil urge. Satan will not be allowed to be David's "creditor", threatening to collect "debts", i.e. punishment for sins which had previously gone unpunished.

Oyev bo means the enemy within him. *Ben aviah* is the outgrowth of sin. At any rate, when David assumes his role as King Messiah, he will be totally free of any residue of any sin; so much so that *vekatoti mipanav tzarav*, that I crush his enemies before him. (verse 24)

24. G'd says "I will take two steps against David's enemies". One step will use David himself as a means, the other step G'd will take quite unilaterally. This is because David has two categories of enemies. One group is physically active against him, this group is called *tzar*, since it literally oppresses him.

The other group hate him in their hearts but take no overt action against him. Concerning the first group, the holy spirit says "I will crush his enemies BEFORE him", meaning that the saintliness reflected in David's face and personal bearing will inspire fear in all those who are his adversaries, such as in Genesis 9,2.

However, when it comes to *me-san-ov*, those who hate him in their hearts, G'd says *egof*, I alone will strike them down, without involving David in any way at all.

25. Despite this interference on David's behalf, I will NOT deduct

כד וְכַתּוֹתִי מִפָּנָיו צָרָיו וּמְשַׂנְאָיו אֶגּוֹף:
כה וֶאֱמוּנָתִי וְחַסְדִּי עִמּוֹ וּבְשְׁמִי תָּרוּם קַרְנוֹ:
כו וְשַׂמְתִּי בַיָּם יָדוֹ וּבַנְּהָרוֹת יְמִינוֹ:
כז הוּא יִקְרָאֵנִי אָבִי אָתָּה אֵלִי וְצוּר יְשׁוּעָתִי:
כח אַף-אָנִי בְּכוֹר אֶתְּנֵהוּ עֶלְיוֹן לְמַלְכֵי-אָרֶץ:

from his merits for having assisted him. Rather, *ve-emunati ve-chasdi immo*, MY faithfulness and love will remain with him. The *chessed* is the fact that I do not deduct from his accumulated merits, not that I am the one striking his enemies. This is justified, since David's victory over his enemies will be attributed to G'd, not to David personally, i.e. *u-vishmi tarum karno*, his horn will be exalted through My name.

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeni has said (Baba Batra 75) that the Messiah is one of three phenomena in the world that bear G'd's name, since it is written (Jeremiah 23,6) "this is the name by which he will be called, "the Lord is our righteousness".

26. At that time will be fulfilled G'd's promise that "I will place his left hand in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers". The Talmud (Sanhedrin 21) reports that when Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter, the archangel Gabriel planted a reed in the Mediterranean, which in the course of time attracted sand etc. and became Rome. The Messiah's left hand will deal principally with the Romans or their descendants.

At that time, remnants of the other three kingdoms which had hosted Israel in exile and oppressed them, will also fall. (Daniel 2,35) The three, i.e. Babylonia, Persia and Syria are identified with certain rivers, hence the reference in our verse to *u-va-ne-harot*. The remnants of these 3 former empires having become insignificant, the Messiah will not need to use the attribute of justice, i.e. *zeroa* to destroy them, but his *yemino*, right hand will suffice.

27. We have explained earlier that *Avraham=Eytan* asked G'd's mercy for David=Messiah who are viewed as one and the same. He had already told everything that G'd had told Samuel, and that David had called G'd "my father", since if it had not been for G'd's direct intervention, David would have died at his premature birth. All David is asking of G'd – not like a son who expects his father to support him is, that G'd should save him from his enemies.

28. G'd responds, that He, on the other hand, does not ONLY consider David as a regular son, but as a first born son whom He will grant the status of highest king on earth.

29*I will maintain My steadfast love for him always; My covenant with him shall endure.*
30*I will establish his line forever, his throne, as long as the heavens last.*
31*If his sons forsake My Teaching and do not live by My rules;*
32*if they violate My laws, and do not observe My commands,*
33*I will punish their transgression with the rod, their iniquity with plagues.*
34*But I will not take away My steadfast love from him; I will not betray My faithfulness.*
35*I will not violate my covenant, or change what I have uttered.*
36*I have sworn by My holiness, once and for all; I will not be false to David.*
37*His line shall continue forever, his throne, as the sun before Me,*

29. The kindness David had asked of G'd, namely to wipe out all the gentile nations, I will grant him *le-olam*, at a future time, not now. "I will be loyal to My covenant", i.e. David himself will be granted that opportunity. There are no conditions attached to this covenant of Mine, says G'd. It is not a conditional promise. However, *vesamti lo-ad zaro* etc. *im ya-azvu banav Torati* etc. the promises made concerning David's descendants ARE subject to their continued loyalty to G'd and His Torah.

30–34. The term *yemey shamayim* is strange. Are there days in heaven which are not days on earth? Furthermore, does not the warning "if they forsake My Torah" (verse 30) automatically include the "if they desecrate My statutes" in verse 31? Why do they all have to be enumerated separately? Surely, the sentence should have commenced with the *vav hachibbur*, i.e. *ve-im chukotay yechallelu*?

Actually, there is a difference between celestial days and terrestrial days in that the former are not separated from one another by an intervening night. This is a hint of things to come. The temples prior to the final temple, experienced destruction, i.e. "night" intervened after periods of "daylight". Not so in the future which is described in our verses. David's descendants will not cease to be, nor will the throne of the kingdom fail to be occupied by his descendants.

כט לְעוֹלָם אֶשְׁמָור-לוֹ חַסְדִּי וּבְרִיתִי נֶאֱמֶנֶת לוֹ׃
ל וְשַׂמְתִּי לָעַד זַרְעוֹ וְכִסְאוֹ כִּימֵי שָׁמָיִם׃
לא אִם-יַעֲזְבוּ בָנָיו תּוֹרָתִי וּבְמִשְׁפָּטַי לֹא יֵלֵכוּן׃
לב אִם-חֻקֹּתַי יְחַלֵּלוּ וּמִצְוֹתַי לֹא יִשְׁמֹרוּ׃
לג וּפָקַדְתִּי בְשֵׁבֶט פִּשְׁעָם וּבִנְגָעִים עֲוֹנָם׃
לד וְחַסְדִּי לֹא-אָפִיר מֵעִמּוֹ וְלֹא אֲשַׁקֵּר בֶּאֱמוּנָתִי׃
לה לֹא-אֲחַלֵּל בְּרִיתִי וּמוֹצָא שְׂפָתַי לֹא אֲשַׁנֶּה׃
לו אַחַת נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי בְקָדְשִׁי אִם-לְדָוִד אֲכַזֵּב׃
לז זַרְעוֹ לְעוֹלָם יִהְיֶה וְכִסְאוֹ כַּשֶּׁמֶשׁ נֶגְדִּי׃

This promise is good EVEN if a king who is descended from David LEAVES my Torah, i.e. fails to actively fulfil the positive commandments, nor to fulfil G'd's social laws actively. – If, however, they would actively desecrate My statutes, (verse 32) then I would have to punish them. (verse 33) Certainly, under such conditions they would not be allowed to be kings over Israel. However, even under such conditions (verse 34) "I G'd will not let My kindness depart from him".

This will be expressed through 1) that there will always be direct descendants of David. 2) Even if the kingdom will be lost to him, it will eventually be restored to him the messianic period. 3) His kingship will endure forever. This third promise is extended to David personally. If there will NOT be a sin which impedes these promises, – the unbroken chain of David's kingdom will commence already with the time David ascends the throne for the first time.

35. Even though I had legal reasons to void My oath, I will not do so, says G'd, will not change one iota what I have uttered.

36. Now, the holy spirit details what it is G'd had sworn. Although I had made a promise consisting of three components, as we explained, ***achat***, it is all part of one single oath, which contains 2 elements. One element is that I will not deceive, disappoint David.

37. The second element is his seed will not become extinct, ever. Secondly, that his throne will continue before Me just as the sun continues. When the sun sets at night, – it disappears only from the eyes of man, but not before Me where it shines around the clock. Similarly, David's throne; though down in the terrestrial regions it may sometimes be empty, not so in My regions. Moreover, the day will come when it will shine on earth forever.

38*as the moon, established forever, an enduring witness in the sky."* Selah.
39*Yet You have rejected, spurned, and become enraged at your anointed.*
40*You have repudiated the covenant with Your servant; You have dragged his dignity in the dust.*
41*You have breached all his defenses, shattered his strongholds.*
42*All who pass by plunder him; he has become the butt of his neighbors.*

38. Even his throne on earth will not continue for fewer than 29 generations, just as the moon disappears only at the end of a 29 day cycle.

We know (Shemot Rabbah 15,26) that from Abraham to Zeddekiah were 29 generations. David's throne remains ready for 29 generations. Eytan=Abraham concludes by saying that instead of two witnesses required by Torah law on earth, he has only one witness; since his witness is G'd Himself, this certainly makes such testimony trustworthy, *selah* because the witness is enduring, everlasting.

39. After Abraham has completed listing all the promises G'd has made concerning David and his issue in the messianic era, he turns as if complaining in the bitterness of his soul about the suffering his descendants endure in exile, since he realizes that he himself had caused this for them when he had chosen exile amongst the nations for them as an alternative to purgatory. (Bereshit Rabbah 44,21)

He said to G'd "YOU have spurned and rejected, become angry with Your anointed". Ibn Ezra already points out that the commentators are surprised at Abraham apparently accusing G'd in this verse as failing to keep His oath. I myself (author) cannot see any problem at all.

When G'd had said in Leviticus 26,44 "even there I will not reject and despise them to destroy them and break My covenant", this refers to a degree of rejection which results in the oblivion of the Jewish people. It does not mean that G'd cannot reject and despise Israel to a lesser degree.

However, there is no NEED to understand Abraham's words as a statement. It can readily be understood as a provocative question, i.e. "surely You have not so rejected and despised that You have become angry even at Your anointed"? Are You extending the length of this exile because You are angry at David? The reason the Psalmist uses

לח כִּיְרֵחַ יִכּוֹן עוֹלָם וְעֵד בַּשַּׁחַק נֶאֱמָן סֶלָה:
לט וְאַתָּה זָנַחְתָּ וַתִּמְאָס הִתְעַבַּרְתָּ עִם-מְשִׁיחֶךָ:
מ נֵאַרְתָּה בְּרִית עַבְדֶּךָ חִלַּלְתָּ לָאָרֶץ נִזְרוֹ:
מא פָּרַצְתָּ כָל-גְּדֵרֹתָיו שַׂמְתָּ מִבְצָרָיו מְחִתָּה:
מב שַׁסֻּהוּ כָּל-עֹבְרֵי דָרֶךְ הָיָה חֶרְפָּה לִשְׁכֵנָיו:

both *zanachta* and *vatim-ass* is because the former refers to G'd distancing Himself from David/Israel, whereas the second indicates the length of time involved, giving rise to the belief that G'd might be angry at David His anointed.

40. Continuing the thought, Abraham asks "Have You repudiated Your covenant with Your servant?" This would be similar to the Peticha on Eycha Rabbati 24 in which we read a comment on Isaiah 33,7 "a covenant He has broken etc." that the angels cried when the temple was destroyed, interpreting that verse as referring to the covenant with Abraham being broken.

Avdecha refers to Abraham, *nizro* to Jacob. We know that Bereshit Rabbah 63,2 refers to Jacob as being the *nizro shel Avraham*, the crown of Abraham, basing this on Proverbs 17,6 "Grandchildren are the crown of their elders, whereas the glory of children is their parents". Jacob being a grandson of Abraham, was Abraham's "crown".

41. Should G'd reply that Israel has sinned (Lamentations 2,1) and that they have brought all this on themselves, Abraham replies "You have already released Your fury against Zion and Jerusalem, (Lamentations 4,11), all its walls have been breached, You have shattered its fortifications". Even the passers by could not get over the extraordinary amount of destruction, (Deut. 29,21–23) wanting to know what had caused this great outburst of G'd's wrath. We have explained there that the destruction of earth and stone was in lieu of the destruction of the people.

42. Abraham wishes that the destruction of all the buildings would at least have meant that Israel would not be molested while in exile, not exposed to plunder by all and sundry plus the derision of its neighbors.

But they have to suffer all this also! They had been so plundered that their neighbors, knowing their poverty did not bother to plunder, only passers by who did not know how destitute Israel had become.

43*You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries, and made all his enemies rejoice.*
44*You have turned back the blade of his sword, and have not sustained him in battle.*
45*You have brought his splendor to an end and have hurled his throne to the ground.*
46*You have cut short the days of his youth; You have covered him with shame.* Selah.
47*How long, O LORD; will You forever hide Your face, will Your fury blaze like fire?*
48*O remember how short my life is; why should You have created every man in vain?*

43. Another reason Abraham complains is that G'd had said (Deut. 32,27) "but for fear of the enemy's anger, who might misjudge and think "my own hand has prevailed". This meant that G'd was afraid that permitting the enemy to "raise his hand" would have a counter productive effect in establishing His credibility. Yet, *harimota yemin tzarecha*, You Yourself raised the right hand of Israel's oppressors. Is this not a contradiction to what is described in Parshat Ha-azinu?

A further complaint by Abraham. We have it on the authority of Solomon (Proverbs 24,7–8) that "he who rejoices over the downfall of his enemy, arouses G'd's anger and will not be able to avert G'd's wrath from himself". It is clear that Israel's enemies rejoice over its downfall, but we see no evidence of You G'd becoming angry at them?

44. It would have been appropriate then for G'd's anger to be turned away from Israel and to be turned against its enemies. This however, has not happened. Israel has not been able to take revenge on its enemies in war.

45. Though the light of David's kingdom had been described as being like the light of the moon which always renews itself after its very brief eclipse (after 29 days), and which immediately regains its strength for 15 days in order to wane again, this has not happened. (there were 14 generations from Abraham to Solomon, Solomon being the 15th. There were another 14 generations from Solomon to Zeddekiah) (Shemot Rabbah 15,26) The latter period reflects the period the light of the moon is on the wane each month. Since no new Jewish king has arisen, the Psalmist complains *hishbato mi-to-horo*! You G'd prevented purification, i.e. renewal.

46. Just as the years between 20 and 35 in a man's life are considered his prime, *alumav*, after which a decline sets in, so the

מג הֲרִימוֹתָ יְמִין צָרָיו הִשְׂמַחְתָּ כָּל-אוֹיְבָיו:
מד אַף-תָּשִׁיב צוּר חַרְבּוֹ וְלֹא הֲקִמֹתוֹ בַּמִּלְחָמָה:
מה הִשְׁבַּתָּ מִטְהָרוֹ וְכִסְאוֹ לָאָרֶץ מִגַּרְתָּה:
מו הִקְצַרְתָּ יְמֵי עֲלוּמָיו הֶעֱטִיתָ עָלָיו בוּשָׁה סֶלָה:
מז עַד-מָה יְהוָה תִּסָּתֵר לָנֶצַח תִּבְעַר כְּמוֹ-אֵשׁ חֲמָתֶךָ:
מח זְכָר-אֲנִי מֶה-חָלֶד עַל-מַה-שָּׁוְא בָּרָאתָ כָּל-בְּנֵי-אָדָם:

first 14 generations in Israel's history were also its prime, after which a gradual decline set in.

The Psalmist complains that if only the first 14 generations from Abraham to Solomon had been one of unbroken growth, he would have remained silent. However, only during two out of these 14 generations starting with Abraham did Israel have a king, 13 generations from Abraham on, Israel was without a king, i.e. *hiktzar yemey alumav*, You have shortened the years of its youth, its prime. Nonetheless, the period of its shame has not been shortened, it seems to go on forever, i.e. *selah*!

47. From the opening words of the verse "how long", it appears that clearly there is a limit to the duration of this exile. From the word *lanetzach*, however, it appears that there is no limit. The Psalmist says that in the Torah (Deut. 10,12) G'd stipulates as follows: "what does G'd demand of you? Only to revere Him, to walk in His paths, to love Him and to serve Him with all your heart and soul etc." These are tremendous and all embracing demands.

The Psalmist implies that if this exile will continue until Israel has met all the demands spelled out in that verse, *lanetzach* then it is likely that this exile will continue indefinitely, forever, i.e. Your anger will then blaze like fire, i.e. there is a real danger that because of the sins committed, Israel would be destroyed by one of G'd's agents (see the use of the term *malachey af ve-chemah* as used in Shemot Rabbah 41,7). The Psalmist accuses that *tisater* the fact that You hide from Israel will eventually cause its destruction rather than its repentance.

48. Here, I, Abraham remember what is this world, *cheled*, which is built on kindness, i.e. whose continued existence is assured only through the practice of acts of love. If so, – there is hope. If however, the world can endure only if all the conditions set out in Deut. 10,12, are met, then You have created man in vain, then the whole exercise was futile, since man cannot meet all these requirements.

49*What man can live and not see death, can save himself from the clutches of* Sheol? Selah.
50*O LORD, where is Your steadfast love of old which You swore to David in Your faithfulness?*
51*Remember, O LORD, the abuse flung at Your servants that I have borne in my bosom [from] many peoples,*
52*how Your enemies, O LORD, have flung abuse, abuse at Your anointed at every step.*
53*Blessed is the LORD forever; Amen and Amen.*

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A prayer of Moses, the man of God.
O LORD, You have been our refuge in every generation.

49. Even if one man in a thousand does live up to these requirements, this can only be due to the fact that he lives in a constant awareness of impending death. Only the thought of death and the accounting to be rendered at a heavenly tribunal keeps man from pursuing the vanities of the world. Even though this is the advice of our sages in Berachot 5, (based on Psalms 4,5 *domu selah*) how many people can live up to that?

50. Where are all the promises made when You loved us and David? Your oath to David, after all, was based on Your love for Your people! You promised not to depart! Was not Your oath ONLY needed for periods when You have REASON not to love Your people? Otherwise, why the need to swear faithfulness!

51. Not only that, says Abraham, but I have carried all the many nations in my bosom who have received blessings due to my merit (Genesis 12,3), whom David would have wiped out had it not been for my intervention! (see Bereshit Rabbah 44,21 on Genesis 14,11)

Abraham had done this in order that through being exiled amongst the nations, Israel would atone for its collective sins instead of descending to purgatory. Now, Abraham says, what I had done in order to help Israel seems to have hurt them, since their exile seems endless!

Please remember O G'd what has now become *cherpat avadecha* the shame of Your servant, and redeem them quickly!

52. Surely I did not interfere with David's plan to wipe out the gentile nations in order for them to blaspheme and fling abuse at Your anointed Messiah!

True, their blaspheming leaves You G'd quite inviolate. However, it is only the long delay of redemption that has emboldened them to blaspheme and heap abuse at You and Your anointed!

מט מִי גֶבֶר יִחְיֶה וְלֹא יִרְאֶה-מָוֶת יְמַלֵּט נַפְשׁוֹ מִיַּד-
שְׁאוֹל סֶלָה:

נ אַיֵּה חֲסָדֶיךָ הָרִאשֹׁנִים אֲדֹנָי נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְדָוִד
בֶּאֱמוּנָתֶךָ:

נא זְכֹר אֲדֹנָי חֶרְפַּת עֲבָדֶיךָ שְׂאֵתִי בְחֵיקִי כָּל-רַבִּים
עַמִּים:

נב אֲשֶׁר חֵרְפוּ אוֹיְבֶיךָ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר חֵרְפוּ עִקְּבוֹת
מְשִׁיחֶךָ:

נג בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם אָמֵן וְאָמֵן:

ספר רביעי

צ א תְּפִלָּה לְמֹשֶׁה אִישׁ-הָאֱלֹהִים אֲדֹנָי מָעוֹן אַתָּה הָיִיתָ
לָנוּ בְּדֹר וָדֹר:

53. But they were never able to affect You at all, since "the Lord is blessed forever and ever", i.e. beyond anybody's power to curse. *amen ve-amen* This is true both during the period of the first temple as well as during the period of the second temple. His power to pour out blessings on earth keeps INCREASING, His name becomes ever more exalted!

Book 4. The next 11 chapters are attributed to Moses.

Psalm 90

1. Concerning the last verse in this chapter, i.e. "may the *noam*, bliss, come to us etc., Midrash Tanchuma 11 on Parshat Pikudey explains that this verse was recited by Moses when the tabernacle had been erected in the desert on the first day of Nissan in the second year of the Exodus. (Exodus 40,17) He asked that G'd's presence should rest on all Israel's handiwork. We may assume therefore that the whole Psalm was recited on that occasion, and that Moses was prompted by the absence of evidence of G'd's *Shechinah* having descended during the 7 days of consecration of the tabernacle. He included all the people of Israel in his prayer, i.e. as if ALL of them were offering this prayer.

The thrust of the prayer is: "we do not ask for the Presence of G'd as an acknowledgement of our merits, but merely as an

2Before the mountains came into being, before You brought forth the earth and the world, from eternity to eternity You are God.
3You return man to dust; You decreed, "Return you mortals!"
4For in Your sight a thousand years are like yesterday that has past, like a watch of the night.

expression of Your boundless kindness, which we have had evidence of since time immemorial".

It is worth remembering Genesis 6,3 "G'd said My spirit will not rule within man *beshagam* (as long as) he is flesh, and his days will be 120 years". Our sages say (Chullin 139) that the numerical value of *beshagam* is 345, equal to the numerical value of *Moshe*. This suggests that ever since G'd created the universe, He had His eye on the Moses of the future, who would receive the Torah on behalf of Israel. G'd has not allowed His attribute of justice, i.e. *lo yadun*, to prevail because of the Israel of the future. Because Moses represented *bassar*, flesh, i.e. the material human being at its most refined, He waited for the arrival of such a human being on the scene of history.

The generation of the tower of Babel was not destroyed so as to enable the emergence of an Israel, eventually. See the Midrash on Deut. 32,8 "when He separated categories of people and set borders for the nations (the 12 Canaanite tribes) in accordance with the number (12 tribes) of the children of Israel".

Moses says to G'd "You have been a *ma-on*, shelter for us (in the sense of *machasseh*, refuge, from generation to generation. The reference is to 2 generations when man had totally forfeited his right to continued existence, and G'd had saved mankind only with a view to the people of Israel which would eventually emerge. Not only since that time, but already prior to the birth of the mountains, which were bone like (i.e. hard) and the emergence of *eretz*, i.e. the land of Israel and *tevel* i.e. the remainder of the land mass, both of which were still soft at the time water was gathered to one place. (Genesis 1,9) Shemot Rabbah 13,1 tells us that G'd took a little dust from beneath His throne and threw it into the water, and earth eventually was formed through this. This is the meaning of Job 38,38 "when the dust grows hard, and clods cleave together." The mountains emerged from the water like a fetus from the mother's womb. The Psalmist therefore says that the mountains were 'mountains', i.e. hard even before they were "born", as distinct from the land mass as such.

ב בְּטֶרֶם הָרִים יֻלָּדוּ וַתְּחוֹלֵל אֶרֶץ וְתֵבֵל וּמֵעוֹלָם עַד-
עוֹלָם אַתָּה אֵל:
ג תָּשֵׁב אֱנוֹשׁ עַד-דַּכָּא וַתֹּאמֶר שׁוּבוּ בְנֵי-אָדָם:
ד כִּי אֶלֶף שָׁנִים בְּעֵינֶיךָ כְּיוֹם אֶתְמוֹל כִּי יַעֲבֹר
וְאַשְׁמוּרָה בַלָּיְלָה:

*Eretz*i.e. the land of Israel, became visible BEFORE the remainder of the land mass, i.e. ***tevel***. This is confirmed by Proverbs 8,26 "before He had made ***eretz***, and the outlying lands." Also You are G'd *me-olam ad olam*, for all future times.

All of this is merely an introduction by Moses, who wants G'd to manifest His presence over the tabernacle NOW.

2. Although G'd's attribute of justice was operative prior to the creation of man, Moses calls on the attribute of kindness i.e. the attribute referred to when the term *El* is used for the name of G'd. In other words, do not withhold Your kindness from us now.

3. Since I have said that You are the G'd who has always been full of kindness, some may ask where G'd's kindness was when they see people suffering greatly. Moses continues that these very sufferings are also a sign of G'd's kindness, since they will provide the incentive for people to repent and thus save themselves from G'd's wrath. *Enosh* is either gentile or a Jew who does not live up to G'd's expectations of a Jew. *Adam* on the other hand is used only to describe the Jew. Seeing what happens to the *Enosh*, even the *Adam* will be inspired to repent whatever sins he is guilty of.

4. An additional kindness G'd has performed for Adam, the first human being, (according to Midrash Hagadol on Genesis 3,17) was to allow him to live 1000 years instead of the single day he was entitled to. G'd had warned him that he would die on the day he ate from the tree of knowledge. (Genesis 2,17.) G'd interpreted the term "day" as it is measured in His own eyes. Since Adam assigned 70 years of his life (compare Pessikta de Bereshit in Torah Shelaymah volume 2, page 354) to David, his 930 years plus the 70 years of David total 1000 years. Alternatively, according to the view that Adam assigned that 70 years to each and every human being of the future generations, and that this is why we have a life span of 70 years, the missing 70 years of Adam's life are also accounted for. However, You G'd have not lengthened those 70 years to be viewed as 1/1000 part of your day, and you let them flow away like sheep.

The meaning of the verse is not that GENERALLY speaking 1000

5You engulf men in sleep; at daybreak they are like grass that renews itself;
6at daybreak it flourishes anew; by dusk it withers and dries up.
7So we are consumed by Your anger, terror-struck by Your fury.

years in His eyes is like 1 day in our eyes; if this is so, why does Moses have to refer to "like yesterday's day"? Besides, Moses should have said "as yesterday which has passed" not "as yesterday which will pass, i.e. *ya-avor*! Even if we were able to say that the past tense and the future tense are being used interchangeably, who does not know that yesterday has passed? Why would Moses have to tell us this? Besides, what is the meaning of "and it is like a watch in the night"?

In fact what Moses is saying is "see O Lord how great has been Your kindness to Adam, for when You had decreed that he would die on the day he ate from the tree, the reference had been to a day as we know it, i.e. 24 hours. Not only did You change that decree to refer to a "day" in your reckoning, but You did not content Yourself to apply an exact 1000 to one ratio, i.e. a day equals 1000 years, but rather You increased the remainder of Adam's day in Your reckoning until part of such a day was equivalent to a whole day, i.e. 1000 years. After all, Adam had not sinned on the very beginning of the 6th day. A third of the day (4 hours of the daylight period) had already passed in G'd creating the mammals, etc., making Adam, placing him in the garden, separating Eve from him etc., so that no more than 1/3 of a day i.e. 8 hours remained. By viewing the time remaining as one third of a day, he still would not have been entitled to more than 333 years of life, even if the human day had been changed to be equal to G'd's day.

By treating the remaining hours as if they were *yom etmol, yesterday, i.e. asher ya-avor* which would come to pass (but had not passed yet) You enabled him to have the full 1000 years at his disposal.

When we read in Genesis 1,24, at the beginning of the 6th day, (i.e. evening of the 5th to the 6th) that the earth was commanded to produce *nefesh chayah* a life force, our sages (Bereshit Rabbah 7,5) says that this refers to the human life-force. They presumably arrive at this conclusion by the process of *gezayrah shaveh*, similar sounding terms being employed for matters even not conceptually related. It says later in Genesis 2,7, "and man being a *nefesh chayah*, a life force." G'd therefore counted the 12 hours (night of the 5th to

ה זַרְמתָם שֵׁנָה יִהְיוּ בַּבֹּקֶר כֶּחָצִיר יַחֲלֹף׃
ו בַּבֹּקֶר יָצִיץ וְחָלָף לָעֶרֶב יְמוֹלֵל וְיָבֵשׁ׃
ז כִּי-כָלִינוּ בְאַפֶּךָ וּבַחֲמָתְךָ נִבְהָלְנוּ׃

the 6th day) of man as already in existence. This gives us a total of 20 hours, however. G'd added 4 hours of the three night watches of 4 hours each of the previous night, *ki ya-avor*, as if it still had to pass and thus made up the total of 24 hours.

At any rate, the thrust of Moses' plea is that G'd should recall His previous acts of kindness to Adam when he extended the latter's life span in order to give him a chance to rehabilitate himself.

5. After all the kindness You have displayed in lengthening the life span of Adam to give him a chance to rehabilitate himself, You did NOT do so for future generations, but You let their years flow by to be submerged, i.e. only 70 years remain for the average individual – as will be mentioned in verse 9.– This too was for man's benefit, so that the fear of death's proximity would act as a catalyst for him to repent throughout his relatively short life span. Only in this fashion will mortal man qualify for the term "alive", and his death is merely like an extended sleep, i.e. *shaynah.* This is what is meant by Bereshit Rabbah 62,3, that G'd shows the righteous the reward in store for them at the time they depart from this world; therefore they "die" happily, i.e. they merely go to sleep. When *boker* morning, i.e. resurrection comes, they will be reincarnated, and be like fresh grass, *kechatzir yachalof*. The righteous are referred to as *yeshaynay afar* sleeping in the dust, as we mention in our daily *amidah* prayer.

6. Unfortunately, despite Your good intentions O G'd, it is in the nature of man – due to his *yetzer hara*, evil impulses – to do some good deeds in his early youth, so that he should not die prematurely, but due to his youthful immaturity he does not persevere in such conduct, but gradually ignores such considerations as the proximity of death. He is like a tree which blossoms briefly, but does not keep sprouting blossoms. As man approaches death, instead of repenting in view of the time when he will have to give an accounting of his actions, instead of cleaving to his Maker he forgets about death, and *yemollel ve-yavesh*, cuts down and lets wither the very good deeds he had set out with in his idealistic youth.

7. As a result, instead of his "death" being merely a long sleep, our end will be due to G'd's anger, *chalinu be-apecha*. *Aph* is a reference to one of the negative destructive forces G'd employs in this world, i.e. the angel of death. Even if death is due to *chemah*, a lesser degree of G'd's anger, it still means that our death is *behalah*, a

8You have set our iniquities before You, our hidden sins in the light of Your face.
9All our days pass away in Your wrath; we spend our years like a sigh.
10The span of our life is seventy years, or, given the strength, eighty years; but the best of them are trouble and sorrow.
They pass by speedily, and we are in darkness.
11Who can know Your furious anger?
Your wrath matches the fear of You.

frightening experience rather than the joyful experience when one dies as a *tzaddik*.

8. Should you say that there is no cause to be dejected, since death will come after a vision of G'd's Presence, and the soul will go back to Heaven and will feel at peace, Moses says "You have set our iniquities in front of You", i.e. our iniquities, *alumeynu* will form a barrier between your soul and the *or panecha* Your shining countenance. Even the souls of people who have not been guilty of intentional sins will experience a greatly diminished Divine radiance. This is the meaning of *alumeynu*, our sins, i.e. the ones that were hidden from our consciousness since we did not commit them knowingly. It follows that we did not benefit from the shorter life span by concentrating on the proximity of death and accountability before G'd.

9. If You G'd will say that we are doubly guilty for not having exploited our shortened life span to act responsibly at all times, we point out that all our days have passed away while You were in wrath. Even our *reykanim*, illiterate ignorant people have accumulated many meritorious deeds but life's problems such as exile and poverty that we all suffer from, are destroying these merits, and don't give Israel a chance to perfect its personal traits.

We know from the Zohar on the verse Genesis 47,29 "Israel's days approached to die", that those days during which a *tzaddik* performs G'd's commandments, acquire a spiritual permanence, and it is these days which approach their owners' death joyfully prepared to behold the face of G'd and rejoice. We all have many such days during which we acquired permanent spiritual values. Unfortunately they have all been cancelled out so to speak, by Your anger *evratecha*, when You decreed that man has to toil for his livelihood, i.e. for his physical survival. (Genesis 3,19). This constant struggle prevents us from developing our personalities spiritually.

ח שַׁתָּ עֲוֹנֹתֵינוּ לְנֶגְדֶּךָ עֲלֻמֵנוּ לִמְאוֹר פָּנֶיךָ׃
ט כִּי כָל-יָמֵינוּ פָּנוּ בְעֶבְרָתֶךָ כִּלִּינוּ שָׁנֵינוּ כְּמוֹ-הֶגֶה׃
י יְמֵי-שְׁנוֹתֵינוּ בָהֶם שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה וְאִם בִּגְבוּרֹת
שְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה וְרָהְבָם עָמָל וָאָוֶן כִּי-גָז חִישׁ וַנָּעֻפָה׃
יא מִי-יוֹדֵעַ עֹז אַפֶּךָ וּכְיִרְאָתְךָ עֶבְרָתֶךָ׃

10. We have a second excuse for not having used all our allotted days in the service of G'd. We must look at the key word *chish* for "quickly", which Moses uses here, instead of the usual *maher*.

The Talmud Yerushalmi, Berachot chapter 2 Halacha 8, tells that Rabbi Avin bar Chiyah died at the early age of 28. It is explained that G'd observed the Rabbi excelling in good deeds at an early age, and He removed him from this life lest he would commit sins as he would get older, or, because G'd becomes more demanding of people as they achieve a progressively higher level of righteousness and piety.

We observe ourselves that the normal life span of 70–80 years granted to man is spent mostly in useless or even sinful pursuits. On the other hand we observe that Jews who try to perfect themselves during their lifetime, are often not even granted that normal life span. This creates the impression that piety drives one to an early grave. *Gas chish*, means the *tzaddik*, righteous person who is cut down prematurely BECAUSE *chish*, he hastened to live a life of G'dliness. Our life then seems as if it flies away, i.e. *na-ufah*.

11. Should one argue that the evidence of our eyes teaches that the wicked receive the reward for their good deeds already in this world, (since every person has some good deeds to his credit), there is no evidence that they are being punished for their sins in the hereafter, whereas the reverse is supposed to be true for the pious, what incentive do the wicked have to become pious? After all the only evidence they have to go by is the difficulties in life experienced by the pious! *Mi yodea oz apecha*, who knows the power of Your anger"? How do we KNOW that G'd has restrained Himself to exact retribution from the wicked only after 70–80 years?

At the same time *mi yodea*, what proof is there that G'd applies increasingly strict yardsticks to the pious? i.e. *u-cheyiratcha evratecha* that Your anger is in proportion to the degree of reverence of those who fear You"?

12. Although man may question G'd's apparent lack of justice, this is foolish, since G'd has provided data by giving us a life expectancy. When a person at 40 years of age, realizes that more than half his

12Teach us to count our days rightly, that we may obtain a wise heart.
13Turn, O LORD!
How long?
Show mercy to Your servants.
14Satisfy us at daybreak with Your steadfast love that we may sing for joy all our days.
15Give us joy for as long as You have afflicted us, for the years we have suffered misfortune.
16Let Your deeds be seen by Your servants, You glory by their children.

allotted span of life has already gone, surely he should concentrate on the fact that only a few years remain to him, and the older he gets the more the proximity of death should prompt him to do *teshuvah*, repent! Not only that, but he should conquer his evil urge to serve G'd with both parts of his being, i.e. *leva-vo*. It was Abraham's great achievement that it could be said of him *umatzata leva-vo ne-eman lefanecha*, You have found both parts of his hearts loyal to You"! (Nechemyah 9,8)

Our sages who have stated in Mishna Avot, 2,10 "repent one day before your death", implied that since man does not know the day he will die, he would have to repent daily.

13. We have already stated that Moses' whole purpose in this prayer is to plead for the manifestation of G'd's Presence in our "lower" world through the completion of the tabernacle, seeing that G'd's Presence had withdrawn due to the sin of the golden calf. Up until now, in his introduction, Moses has said that it is not surprising that people are sinful. He does so in order to put the people's sin into perspective, i.e. to make it appear relatively less severe, so that it would not hinder acceptance of his prayer.

At this point he comes out with the request *shuva hashem*, come back O Lord! Moses says that even if You have tarried, You will eventually come back, so *ad matay*, how long will You delay? We know that the previous return of the *Shechinah* to earth had been accomplished by seven good people (i.e. Abraham, Isaac etc.), just as the process of the *Shechinah*'s withdrawal previously had progressed because of the sin of 7 people commencing with Adam, Enosh etc..

Should G'd reply that He had already exceeded what could be expected by foregoing His intention to destroy the Jewish people, i.e. *hinachem* (compare Exodus 32,14), Moses says that such reconsideration while G'd remains in Heaven is not seen as an

יב לִמְנוֹת יָמֵינוּ כֵּן הוֹדַע וְנָבִיא לְבַב חָכְמָה:
יג שׁוּבָה יְהוָה עַד-מָתָי וְהִנָּחֵם עַל-עֲבָדֶיךָ:
יד שַׂבְּעֵנוּ בַבֹּקֶר חַסְדֶּךָ וּנְרַנְּנָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בְּכָל-יָמֵינוּ:
טו שַׂמְּחֵנוּ כִּימוֹת עִנִּיתָנוּ שְׁנוֹת רָאִינוּ רָעָה:
טז יֵרָאֶה אֶל-עֲבָדֶיךָ פָּעֳלֶךָ וַהֲדָרְךָ עַל-בְּנֵיהֶם:

accomplishment except when it becomes visible to your servants, *be-avodecha*, i.e. on earth, so that we can become the carriers of the Divine entourage, *Shechinah*.

14. Moses adds another reason why the *Shechinah*'s return to the Jewish people is desirable, namely that historically the Jewish people are at the beginning of their career, i.e. *baboker*, it is the morning (of a day). Moses is aware of future exiles and persecutions the Jewish people will experience. He argues that if G'd would not *sab-eynu chassdecha*, satisfy us with His kindness at this point in our history, we would not be able to endure future persecutions, since we would feel that we never had an extended period of good times. If You will fill us with Your goodness now, *nissmecha bechol yameynu*, it will sustain us in joy for the balance of our history. We will always be able to maintain the hope of an eventually brighter future, even while in exile.

15. Moses suggests that the problems Israel has experienced in Egypt were viewed by them as minor i.e. *ki-yemot* like days, when compared to the discomfort and fears experienced since Exodus, i.e. *shenot ra-inu ra-ot*, we have seen evil for years. We feel as if we had seen *ra-ah* for years. The reference is to Pharaoh's prediction of the *ra-ah*, evil, the Jews would encounter once they had left Egypt. (Exodus 10,10) The fear inspired by these words of Pharaoh weighs heavily on us, as if we had suffered from it for years. Therefore, Moses asks G'd to grant joy to the Jewish people *samcheynu*, since they had considered the many years of cruel servitude in Egypt merely like "days".

16. We are told in Midrash Rabbah Bamidbar, that when the tabernacle in our lower world was erected, the corresponding tabernacle was erected in the "higher" world also, i.e. the spiritual counterpart to the tabernacle. Moses pleads that *avadecha* i.e. the patriarchs be shown that G'd had returned to their children through the erection of the tabernacle on earth and G'd's Presence therein. This is based on Exodus 25,9 that the blueprint of the tabernacle in our world was based on the Tabernacle in the "higher" world.

17*May the favor of the LORD, our God, be upon us; let the work of our hands prosper, O prosper the work of our hands!*

91 *O you who dwell in the shelter of the Most High and abide in the protection of Shaddai—*
2*I say of the LORD, my refuge and stronghold, my God in whom I trust,*

17. Our sages (Tanchumah on Parshat Pekudey) who confirm that Moses prayed at the time of erecting the tabernacle that G'd's Presence should rest on Israel's handiwork, as expressed in our verse, suggest that the Presence of G'd was to be manifest not on the beams, the coverings of the tabernacle etc. but that it was the people who counted. From this it follows that there are two conditions which have to be met in order for the Divine Presence to manifest itself. 1) The people have to be *tzaddikim*, righteous. 2) The tabernacle has to correspond with the tabernacle in the "higher" world.

The latter is achieved not only by meticulously following the instruction of how to construct it, i.e. Exodus chapter 25, but through the awareness of the builders that what they are building was a model of the spiritual sanctuary. Only then would the tabernacle achieve its sanctity. Once these conditions have been met, G'd can view Himself on earth as if He were dwelling in the "higher" world. It is Moses' ardent wish "that G'd's graciousness would be granted to us, *vi-yehi noam hashem alaynu*. Man must be aware that he is to function as G'd's sanctuary, i.e. G'd must be able to feel at home within man. Moses is saying to G'd that if You will endow our work, then it will be seen as if YOU have established us. In such circumstances our handiwork, the tabernacle, though the work of human hands, not like Mount Moriah which is the NATURAL gateway to Heaven, will be linking the tabernacle to its counterpart in Heaven.

Psalm 91

1. According to an opinion in Midrash Rabbah Shemot, this is a continuation of Moses' previous thought at the end of the last chapter, concerning the manifestation of G'd's Presence now that the tabernacle had been erected. Previously, Moses had stressed that the predominant purpose of *Shechinah* is to be at home

יז וִיהִי נֹעַם אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כּוֹנְנָה
עָלֵינוּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כּוֹנְנֵהוּ:

צא א יֹשֵׁב בְּסֵתֶר עֶלְיוֹן בְּצֵל שַׁדַּי יִתְלוֹנָן:
ב אֹמַר לַיהוָה מַחְסִי וּמְצוּדָתִי אֱלֹהַי אֶבְטַח-בּוֹ:

betachtonim, amongst His creatures, i.e. man, not in nature. Now Moses wants to make it clear that G'd's Presence in the physical world does not impose upon Him the restrictions of space that are part of the physical universe. His residence on earth cannot be compared to the presence of angels in our world, when it does occur. The Zohar explains that the angels which visited Abraham (Genesis 18) after he had circumcised himself, appeared in the guise of men. Similarly, the angels which surrounded Jacob prior to his meeting with Esau (Genesis 32,2) looked like perfectly normal human beings.

The same does not hold true of G'd. He sits *beseter*, hidden from human eyes, He does not adapt Himself by garbing Himself in materials found in the physical universe. One reason is that since the earth is His, He does not need to adapt to it. This is something exclusive to G'd, since He is *elyon*, supreme. This is presumably what the sages had in mind when they explained that the word *elyon* is meant to include also the *malachey hasharet*, the angels who perform fixed tasks for Him. Moses points out the contrast between G'd who sits *be-seter*, invisible, and the angels who appear openly, unconcealed.

Hence, G'd is conceived to be in the shadow of *Shaddai*, in this physical world which is beneath the shadow of "heaven". The galaxies are called "the shadow of *Shadday*", since despite appearances to the contrary the G'd who had said *dai*, enough, at creation, has set boundaries to the world of galaxies. (which appears unbounded) These galaxies would have kept expanding indefinitely but for the Creator's saying *dai*, enough! (compare Chagigah 12)

2. Moses tells the people not to think that the reason he asks for G'd's Presence is that it should serve as his shelter and refuge, i.e. *machseh umetzudah*, which would imply that he would feel safe only when G'd is in the confined area of the tabernacle. Moses says "I trust in Him because He is my G'd". He does not relate to physical proximity or physical distance.

Even when He is in the Heavens, He is not absent from earth. In fact, were it not for the constant outpourings of His *shefa*,

3*that He will save you from the fowler's trap, from the destructive plague.*
4*He will cover you with His pinions; you will find refuge under His wings; His fidelity is an encircling shield.*
5*You need not fear the terror by night, or the arrow that flies by day,*
6*the plague that stalks in the darkness, or the scourge that ravages at noon.*
7*A thousand may fall at your left side, ten thousand at your right, but it shall not reach you.*
8*You will see it with your eyes, you will witness the punishment of the wicked.*
9*Because you took the LORD—my refuge, the Most High—as your haven,*
10*no disease touch your tent.*

generosity, the universe would be unable to endure. His very existence without any specific motion or action on His part, is my shelter and refuge.

3. "See here Israel", Moses says, arguing with Israel, it is He who will save me from snakes, pestilence etc., i.e. from man's natural enemies.

4. He will cover you with His wings, and He places a dividing curtain between you and the snare that is laid, in order to save you from it. By taking you under His wings they will cover you (envelop you) so that the pestilence cannot reach you. – Better you should not need this kind of protection, His very truth should be your shield, *tzinah* against traps, His very armour, *socherah* protection against pestilence. In other words, your faith in Him, His truth and the reliability of His promises should suffice.

5,6,7. The "external forces, i.e. *chitzonim*, the forces of Satan will fall by your sides, 10 times as many on your right side, *revavah*, since the right side, the side that is by nature inclined towards sanctity and holiness also attracts far more of the adversaries than the left, which needs less effort by the forces of Satan to entrap it. Through your righteousness, these forces will fall with His help. Even though they may frighten you – *elecha lo yigash*, they will not get to you.

8. He will supervise from His residence and do your will, so that you will only need to set eyes on your enemies and you will already see the wicked receive their retribution. Talmud Sanhedrin 100, and other sources describe that a *tzaddik*, righteous person merely has to fix his eyes on a person and he will turn into a heap of bones. This

ג כִּי הוּא יַצִּילְךָ מִפַּח יָקוּשׁ מִדֶּבֶר הַוּוֹת:
ד בְּאֶבְרָתוֹ יָסֵךְ לָךְ וְתַחַת-כְּנָפָיו תֶּחְסֶה צִנָּה וְסֹחֵרָה
אֲמִתּוֹ:
ה לֹא תִירָא מִפַּחַד לָיְלָה מֵחֵץ יָעוּף יוֹמָם:
ו מִדֶּבֶר בָּאֹפֶל יַהֲלֹךְ מִקֶּטֶב יָשׁוּד צָהֳרָיִם:
ז יִפֹּל מִצִּדְּךָ אֶלֶף וּרְבָבָה מִימִינֶךָ אֵילֶיךָ לֹא יִגָּשׁ:
ח רַק בְּעֵינֶיךָ תַבִּיט וְשִׁלֻּמַת רְשָׁעִים תִּרְאֶה:
ט כִּי-אַתָּה יְהוָה מַחְסִי עֶלְיוֹן שַׂמְתָּ מְעוֹנֶךָ:
י לֹא-תְאֻנֶּה אֵילֶיךָ רָעָה וְנֶגַע לֹא-יִקְרַב בְּאָהָלֶךָ:

is quite independent of G'd's *Shechinah* resting on the tabernacle or temple, or the resort to special prayer by the *tzaddik* for G'd to kill such individual in question. But since all the earth is full of G'd's glory and His supervisory powers extend over all that goes on, the *tzaddik* who fixes the sinner with his eyes makes enough of an impression to cause the sinner's immediate death. This is the meaning of "you will only have to behold with your eyes, and already you will see the retribution of the wicked".

9. This proves that even while You G'd reside in the Heavens, You are still my refuge.

10. Moses is still speaking to the individual Israelite, saying that in order to save a Jew, G'd does not need to reside in the tabernacle, since He has saved Jews also before there was a tabernacle, when His residence was still in Heaven. He had even protected you from all the troubles Pharaoh had claimed to have seen in the Jewish horoscope.

Nega, i.e. killing of the Egyptian firstborn *lo yikrav be-oholecha*, did not occur in your tents, i.e. all Jewish firstborn were spared. Even though the Egyptians had sent their firstborn children to Jewish homes to sleep alongside the Jewish children in order to save their lives, this did not help. We have explained all this on Exodus 12,23. G'd personally had to administer this plague, since by delegating it to the angel of death, distinctions between the Jewish firstborns and Egyptian firstborns could not have been made. Only in this way were the Jewish homes placed out of bounds to the angel of death. All of this G'd did WITHOUT residing amongst you in the tabernacle, Moses intimates.

[11]For He will order His angels to guard you wherever you go.
[12]They will carry you in their hands lest you hurt your foot on a stone.
[13]You will tread on cubs and vipers; you will trample lions and asps.
[14]"Because he is devoted to Me I will deliver him; I will keep him safe, for he knows My name.
[15]When he calls on Me, I will answer him; I will be with him in distress; I will rescue him and make him honored;

11. Should you ask that if G'd does all this from the Heavens etc. what reason is there for Him to send angels out altogether in order to guard us instead of guarding us Himself? Moses said that these angels had been dispatched at the time of the Exodus to serve as celestial retinue, to guard us all along the route we were travelling. (not to save us from specific dangers)

12. G'd did not need these angels to protect you, but merely to carry you on *kapayim* hands, so that you would not experience discomfort such as hurting your feet on rocks or stones. The reference is to the journey from Rameses to Sukkot, of which the Torah had said "I carried you on the wings of eagles". (Exodus 19,4)

13. This had not been to save you from snakes and other wild animals that inhabit the desert, since G'd had killed those by means of His cloud, which G'd had made travel with you. You only had to tread upon the jackal, serpent or lion, they were dead already.

14. The holy spirit replies in the name of G'd, as if He Himself were speaking, that Israel should know that another reason G'd sent angels instead of leading them Himself was, that they did not possess sufficient merit, since they had not displayed adequate *cheshek*, desire, for G'd's proximity.

Once *bi chashak*, Israel will truly yearn for Me, *aphalte-hu*, I personally will deliver it, *asagveyhu*, I will raise it high, *ki yada shemi*, since they have become aware of My name. All this without My descending to dwell in the tabernacle.

15. The fact that you observe that AFTER I have delivered you they will call upon Me and I will respond to them, does NOT mean that I have not been with Israel prior to their calling on Me, since merely the fact that they desired Me without expressing it in prayer had been enough for Me to be with them, *betzarah* when they were in distress.

יא כִּי מַלְאָכָיו יְצַוֶּה-לָּךְ לִשְׁמָרְךָ בְּכָל-דְּרָכֶיךָ:
יב עַל-כַּפַּיִם יִשָּׂאוּנְךָ פֶּן-תִּגֹּף בָּאֶבֶן רַגְלֶךָ:
יג עַל-שַׁחַל וָפֶתֶן תִּדְרֹךְ תִּרְמֹס כְּפִיר וְתַנִּין:
יד כִּי בִי חָשַׁק וַאֲפַלְטֵהוּ אֲשַׂגְּבֵהוּ כִּי-יָדַע שְׁמִי:
טו יִקְרָאֵנִי וְאֶעֱנֵהוּ עִמּוֹ אָנֹכִי בְצָרָה אֲחַלְּצֵהוּ וַאֲכַבְּדֵהוּ:

Having done this, I look forward to their prayers, i.e. *yikraeni ve-e-eneh* when he calls Me I will answer him. (The Jewish people). Our sages have said "G'd is desirous of hearing the prayers of the righteous". (Yevamot 64, et al) This is also the meaning of Psalms 21,3 "You have given him his heart's desire, and You have not withheld from him the request of his lips".

If two friends of a king each have a request to make of the king, and the king has had previous knowledge of both requests, he may say to one of the appellants "keep silent for your request has already been granted". He may hear out the other appellant waiting until he has completed verbalizing his request before granting it. Which of the two appellants did the king prefer? It is obvious that he preferred the latter, why else would he subject himself to having to listen to a request which he was already aware of? However, he honoured the second appellant by delighting in listening to his words. The Psalmist says therefore, "though You have given him his heart's desire (already), You have not withheld from him the opportunity to verbalize his request."

G'd says here, if sometimes you notice that I respond only AFTER you have called Me, this is not evidence that I had been distant until you called, since I have PROVED to have been on your side and have arranged your rescue; you had merely not yet been aware of your impending rescue.

Possibly, the 3 expressions ***achaltzeyhu, achabdeyhu***, and ***asbi-eyhu*** in the next verse refer to the 3 basic needs of man, i.e. children, health and livelihood. G'd would be saying 1) ***achaltzeyhu*** I rescue him from danger. 2) ***achabdeyhu***, I grant these three needs, i.e. wealth. We have learned that if a person is honoured in his town he is considered wealthy. (Kiddushin 49)

3) Concerning life span, ***orech yamim*** verse 16, and concerning the blessing of children, G'd says "I will satisfy him ***asbiyehu***, with My salvation". We have a tradition that he who has children will not be shamed when he speaks with his enemies in public, i.e. I will

16 *I will let him live to a ripe old age, and show him My salvation."*

92 *A psalm. A song; for the sabbath day.*
2 *It is good to praise the LORD, to sing hymns to Your name, O Most High,*
3 *To proclaim Your steadfast love at daybreak, Your faithfulness each night*

demonstrate *areyhu* for him publicly My salvation". (compare Psalms 127,5) The arrows in the quiver referred to here, (Psalm 127) are the children of a person.

16. By the very fact that such a person suffers here on earth, *orech yamim* length of life in the hereafter, the world of infinite duration *asbi-eyhu*, I will provide him with satisfaction.

Another reason is that since G'd the Master is so to speak in exile, Israel has to endure deprivations, since it is not fitting for the Master to be in exile and the servant to enjoy himself. The servant's fate can hardly be expected to be better than that of his master. The *tzaddik* too may have to await redemption of the Jewish nation, at which time G'd will emerge from His self imposed exile. Only then *asbi-eyhu*, can I fulfil the *tzaddik*'s needs completely, *le-orech yamim*, i.e. after the Messiah will arrive.

Psalm 92

1. 1) Why does the Psalmist describe this both as hymn, *mizmor* and as song, *shir*?

2) We would expect the Sabbath to be mentioned somewhere in this hymn, yet the Psalmist addresses only G'd, i.e. "it is good to pay homage to the Lord" (verse 2)?

3) Who did not know that it is good to pay homage to the Lord? Besides, why does the Psalmist distinguish between 2 forms of paying homage, i.e. *tov* it is good, and *lezamer* to sing praises?

4) Why should G'd's kindness be mentioned in the morning, and G'd's faithfulness during the night? Why is *boker*, morning, in the singular, whereas *leylot*, nights, is in the plural?

5) Regardless of whether we accept the view that this Psalm too was authored by Moses or whether we credit *Adam harishon*, first man with this Psalm, neither one had stringed instruments at his disposal! (as are mentioned here)

There are those who ascribe this hymn to Adam, who would have died right after he sinned if the Sabbath, which was about to make

סו אֹרֶךְ יָמִים אַשְׂבִּיעֵהוּ וְאַרְאֵהוּ בִּישׁוּעָתִי:

צב

א מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת:
ב טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת לַיהוָה וּלְזַמֵּר לְשִׁמְךָ עֶלְיוֹן:
ג לְהַגִּיד בַּבֹּקֶר חַסְדֶּךָ וֶאֱמוּנָתְךָ בַּלֵּילוֹת:

its entrance, had not intervened on his behalf, (before he could do *teshuvah*) as is explained in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer chapter 19. The Sabbath pointed out to G'd that no creature had died, i.e. been killed during the 6 days of creation, and it did not want to be the first day on which death as retribution occurred. Adam was saved from *gehinnom*, purgatory due to this intervention. He immediately composed this hymn as a response.

To explain the meaning of this Psalm, we need to refer to 2 well known statements of our sages. One is that G'd withdrew His *Shechinah* "Divine Presence" to the first of seven layers of Heaven, immediately after Adam had committed his sin. This resulted in earth suffering 10 curses as pointed out in the Zohar, and the world being deprived of 6 items. (compare in part Zohar on Genesis 3,24) Also, Zohar with Sulam, volume 2 item 312)

The second statement of our sages which is relevant to our Psalm is the comment on Genesis 3,8 "they heard the voice of the Lord walking in the garden, by the spirit of the day". This is understood to mean that the voice of G'd's mercy came to urge Adam to accept his punishment so that he would not have to die immediately. *Ruach hayom*, in this instance refers to the sanctity of the Sabbath which began to extend its influence on the remainder of the 6th day. Adam therefore owed a debt of gratitude to the Sabbath and to G'd who had accepted the advocacy of the Sabbath on Adam's behalf. Adam's survival became possible through G'd withdrawing to the first of the 7 celestial regions. (Alshich on the Torah). Adam therefore thanked both the Sabbath and G'd. So as not to appear ungrateful, he introduced the hymn by saying "I have to acknowledge my debt to the Sabbath, by dedicating this hymn; at the same time I must thank G'd who granted me life, enabling me to thank Him, since one cannot thank G'd from the grave.

3. He must not tarry in thanking G'd, but do so in the morning, for he did not know whether he would still be alive by evening, since G'd had said "on the day you eat from it you will die." Once he had seen that he did not die at the onset of night, he considered the possibility

4With a ten-stringed harp, with voice and lyre together.
5You have gladdened me by Your deeds, O LORD; I shout for joy at Your handiwork.
6How great are Your works, O LORD, how very subtle Your designs!

of the word "day" having meant a 24 hour period. (which would not be complete until the morning of the seventh day) If he would still be alive by morning, he would give thanks and proclaim G'd's kindness, *lehagid baboker chassdecha.*

4. The nights, when G'd's faithfulness is to be acknowledged, are the nights of the future, i.e. the time of David, who had all the stringed instruments mentioned at his disposal. Being the reincarnate of Adam, David endeavored to rehabilitate his ancestor by his exceptional clinging to G'd. *Shimcha elyon*, Your name is supreme, is a reference to G'd 's withdrawal to the celestial regions, i.e. *elyon*, highest after Adam's sin. David's hymns are designed to bring G'd back. The playing of the lyre itself, took place at nighttime, the strings being activated by the north wind. (Berachot 3) This is what is meant by *emunatcha baleylot*, Your faithfulness at night, i.e. G'd gave Adam extra years. If not for that, Sheth, David's ancestor, (Adam's 3rd son) would not have been born. Adam commenced his own rehabilitation process. It was completed by David preparing the ground for the eventual Messiah.

Our sages say on Ruth 4,18, "these are the descendants of Peretz etc." that only on two occasions in the Bible is the word *toldot*, generations, descendants, spelled plene, i.e. with both letters *vav*. The first time is in Genesis 2,4, the other time here in the book of Ruth. The reason is that Adam's sin had resulted in the earth being cursed by 6 items becoming absent (numerical value of letter *vav*). This means that at creation the earth possessed 6 advantages which it lost after the sin, however, these 6 advantages will be restored by the Messiah, the descendant of Peretz. (compare Yalkut Shimoni Ruth, 609)

We still need to know why it is THIS reference to Peretz in the book of Ruth which contains the hint of his descendant the Messiah restoring to the world what it had lost, instead of providing us with a clue to this at the time Peretz's BIRTH is recorded. However, it was considered more fitting to provide this clue at the time the birth of David is mentioned, i.e. Ruth 4,22. (end of the paragraph "these are the descendants of Peretz")

5. Adam says: "though some people may not believe in my sincerity when I thank G'd for allowing me to live, when previously I

ד עֲלֵי-עָשׂוֹר וַעֲלֵי-נָבֶל עֲלֵי הִגָּיוֹן בְּכִנּוֹר׃
ה כִּי שִׂמַּחְתָּנִי יְהוָה בְּפָעֳלֶךָ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ אֲרַנֵּן׃
ו מַה-גָּדְלוּ מַעֲשֶׂיךָ יְהוָה מְאֹד עָמְקוּ מַחְשְׁבֹתֶיךָ׃

had unlimited life expectancy, it is NOT true that I am saddened by the need to die. Death is preferable to a lifetime full of *yissurim*, suffering, afflictions. Man's function is to serve as G'd's *merkavah*, to be the carrier of the Divine entourage. He cannot do this, when through coarsening and corrupting his personality through sin, he becomes unfit to fulfil such a function. In order to regain his original purity and serve as a pure vessel able to be the carrier of the *merkavah*, man has to die, merge with the soil, so that the *zuhama shel nachash*, the pollution absorbed by the original sin induced by the serpent (read Satan) will be completely removed. Even when Israel stood at Mount Sinai and had freed itself from this *zuhama*, they were not on the level of Adam before his sin, since the evil urge had not yet become part of him, had exerted intellectual but no sensual pull. In the future, at the time of the resurrection, G'd will remove this heart of stone (the evil urge) by substituting a heart of flesh. (compare Ezekiel 11,19) It follows that the decree of death was actually beneficial for man, holding out the hope of eventual total rehabilitation.

Had Adam and Eve lived even a million years, they would not have been able to look forward to such total rehabilitation no matter how many *yissurim* afflictions they would have experienced during the course of such a long lifetime.

When Rabbi Meir said (Bereshit Rabbah 9) on Genesis 1,31, that the words "here it was very good" refer to death being "good", this is what he had in mind. Adam rejoices that *bema-asseh yadecha aranen*, that in the future he will once more become *maasseh yadecha*, G'd's handiwork, a creature totally devoid of input by the *zuhama* of the serpent. He will have a chance to be a totally rehabilitated human being and as such *aranen*, sing the praises of the Lord.

6. Our intellect cannot comprehend the manner in which we will be rehabilitated through *gilgulim*, transmigration of souls etc., since these matters belong to *gadlu ma-asecha* Your great works. It is strange that G'd's profound thoughts i.e. *amku machshevotecha* is contrasted with *kessil*, the fool, instead of with a man of great intellect. After all what is so strange if an ignorant man *ish baar*, cannot comprehend the thought processes of G'd? However, since

7A brutish man cannot know, a fool cannot understand this:
8though the wicked sprout like grass, though all evildoers blossom, it is only that they may be destroyed forever.
9But You are exalted, O LORD, for all time.
10Surely, Your enemies, O LORD, surely, Your enemies perish; all evildoers are scattered.
11You raise my horn high like that of a wild ox; I am soaked in freshening oil.

Adam had praised death as *tov*, good, since it enables eventual purification and refinement of resurrected man, he says that if he cannot even understand the *ma-assecha* Your revealed actions, how much less can we understand *machashevotecha* Your thought processes, the results of which have not even become manifest? *Ish*, i.e. even a man of distinction, an intellectual, is merely *baar*, ignorant, by comparison to Your intellect.

Anyone is merely a fool, *kessil*, if he tries to understand what is inherently beyond his understanding. Or, man must not even try and understand G'd's thought processes seeing he cannot even understand the workings of the universe, i.e. *ma-assecha*. Another version of the inadequacy of the human mind to comprehend the workings of the mind of G'd is, that when Adam was presented with Eve, he said "this will be called *ishah*, for she was taken from *ish*". (This will be called a feminine MAN.) Genesis 2,23. Had G'd merely taken a rib or a bone from Adam and added a piece of flesh, surely such would not qualify for the description *ishah* as part of man. Rather, G'd took Adam's soul, life force etc. so that the person who emerged could truly be called *ishah*, i.e. a reincarnation of man, his alter ego. Just as we do not understand this process of *gilgul* of transmigration of a soul, something which actually happened before Adam's very eyes, we certainly cannot be expected to understand the *gilgul* of the future, which so far is only in the planning stages by G'd, i.e. *amku machshevotecha*, Your profound plan, but has not yet been executed. (compare Midrash Tanchuma Parshat Nitzavim, Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeni)

The statute of a living person becoming impure when under the same covered airspace as the dead, (Numbers 19,14) would be totally incomprehensible, were it not for the fact that the *zuhama* of the serpent remains behind in the dead person's body, and attaches itself to other bodies and vessels within the same confines. Through his death, the soul=personality of the deceased frees himself from this

ז אִישׁ-בַּעַר לֹא יֵדָע וּכְסִיל לֹא-יָבִין אֶת-זֹאת:
ח בִּפְרֹחַ רְשָׁעִים כְּמוֹ עֵשֶׂב וַיָּצִיצוּ כָּל-פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן
לְהִשָּׁמְדָם עֲדֵי-עַד:
ט וְאַתָּה מָרוֹם לְעֹלָם יְהוָה:
י כִּי הִנֵּה אֹיְבֶיךָ יְהוָה כִּי-הִנֵּה אֹיְבֶיךָ יֹאבֵדוּ יִתְפָּרְדוּ
כָּל-פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן:
יא וַתָּרֶם כִּרְאֵים קַרְנִי בַּלֹּתִי בְּשֶׁמֶן רַעֲנָן:

residue of impurity. Death therefore is a positive happening, as it prepares for the eventual resurrection, free from the erstwhile *zuhama*.

8. Should a person express doubt about G'd's justice, when he sees the wicked flourish, the Psalmist reassures such doubters by saying that such apparent flourishing will result in the wicked being destroyed utterly when they die. Their persons will never be resurrected.

Verses 7 and 8 can also be read together, the subject being the lack of understanding by the ignorant of the success of the wicked, and the success of even the children of the wicked. The Psalmist assures that this will be shortlived, no eternal life is awaiting the wicked.

9. We are faced with the dilemma that on the one hand it is accepted that our sins cause damage to G'd's image as *tzur yeladcha teshi* (Deut. 32,18), "you have weakened the Lord who gave birth to you". (Midrash hagadol Ha-azinu)

The process would be similar to a mother's milk drying up gradually when she has no baby to nurse. Similarly, G'd having no one whom He can pour out His generosity on, leads to a diminished capacity for pouring out such generosity. On the other hand Elihu has said (Job 35,6) "if you sin, how can you affect Him?" However numerous your transgressions, what can you do to Him?

The Kabbalists, however, understand that the damage caused by sinners is the damage they do to their own souls which are attached to celestial regions. Why would G'd tolerate such ongoing damage by the wicked, by allowing them a regular life span? Besides, why does the Psalmist suggest that these people when they die expire totally, when we see that they enjoy 2 or 3 transmigrations of their souls, i.e. are given an opportunity to rehabilitate themselves in a different reincarnation?

[12]*I shall see the defeat of my watchful foes, hear of the downfall of the wicked who beset me.*
[13]*The righteous bloom like a date-palm; they thrive like a cedar in Lebanon;*
[14]*planted in the house of the LORD, they flourish in the courts of our God.*
[15]*In old age they still produce fruit; they are full of sap and freshness, attesting that the LORD is upright, my rock, in whom there is no wrong.*

[16]*Attesting that the LORD is upright, my rock, in whom there is no wrong.*

To this our verse answers that G'd is and remains *bamarom*, in the unattainable "high" regions, beyond the power of any sinner to damage, as Elihu said in Job. G'd however, does give the wicked a second chance through *gilgul* transmigration of souls, before consigning them to utter oblivion.

10. When He sees, that during their second life span they are still G'd's enemies, if they are still G'd's enemies during their third life span, (*hineh oyvecha* twice) then they will be lost, they will lose all contact with You, i.e. *yitpardu*, but no damage is inflicted upon You.

Or, *yitpardu* simply means they will be severed from all contact with *kedushah*, sanctity and spirituality. Especially will this be so, since they have been given additional opportunities at rehabilitating themselves during their second and third reincarnation.

One could also distinguish between *oyvecha*, i.e. those who sin in order to anger G'd. Of them it is said *yovedu*, they will perish utterly. However, those who sin merely in order to indulge their senses, will not be utterly destroyed, but *yitpardu* they will be separated from holiness etc. due to their having created a barrier between themselves and G'd by their deeds.

11. In Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer chapter 19 this verse is seen as referring to Menachem ben Amiel ben Yosef (a contemporary judge of Hillel who became a heretic). He is described as having gored in all directions just like a *re-em* whose large horns enable him to attack in all directions. Adam here acknowledges that despite the variety of sins he had been guilty of, he has been given extra time. Our sages say that the ox Adam offered as a sacrifice to G'd had only one horn on its forehead. This is what is referred to here, i.e. like a *re-em* which has only one horn, a unicorn. The kingdom of David excels in the concept of unity. This is why Adam's sacrifice was pleasing in the eyes of the Lord, since David would be his descendant.

יב וַתַּבֵּט עֵינִי בְּשׁוּרָי בַּקָּמִים עָלַי מְרֵעִים תִּשְׁמַעְנָה
אָזְנָי:
יג צַדִּיק כַּתָּמָר יִפְרָח כְּאֶרֶז בַּלְּבָנוֹן יִשְׂגֶּה:
יד שְׁתוּלִים בְּבֵית יְהוָה בְּחַצְרוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ יַפְרִיחוּ:
טו עוֹד יְנוּבוּן בְּשֵׂיבָה דְּשֵׁנִים וְרַעֲנַנִּים יִהְיוּ:
טז לְהַגִּיד כִּי-יָשָׁר יְהוָה צוּרִי וְלֹא-עַוְלָתָה בּוֹ:

David's kingdom surpassed that of Saul in that he was anointed by the oil of anointment from a horn, *keren*, whereas Saul was anointed with oil from a *pach*, jar. Saul and Yehu were anointed with oil of *afarsimon*, whereas David was anointed with the *shemen hamishcha* the oil of anointing specified in Exodus 30,23–34. The difference lies in the fact that *keren* horn, symbolizes greatness, whereas the *shemen hamishchah*, oil of anointing, symbolizes continuity, since it does not shrink evaporate nor dries out. It retains its volume, remains fresh, *ra-anon*.

Our sages say that a mere two drops were put on Aaron's beard (Rashi, Talmud Keritot 5) and just as it was always fresh, so whoever was anointed with it retained his status. Adam, i.e. the Psalmist says, A) G'd gave me greatness like the greatness of the *re-em*. B) I retain this youthful vigour all my life, just as the *shemen hamishchah* always stays fresh.

12. Should one question Adam how he could be so certain that his reincarnate David would indeed become what Adam claims he will become, Adam says "my eyes have seen all those who stand in line ready to accuse me, but on the other hand my ears have heard those who work on my behalf."

13. For the sake of my eventual offspring the righteous, David whose life span is also 70 years will flourish like a palm which blossoms after 70 years. He in turn will produce Solomon who will flourish and grow tall like the cedar in the Lebanon.

14. After David and Solomon will be planted in the house of G'd, (celestial regions) after their departure from earth, the sceptre of Royalty will not depart from the courtyards of our Lord, i.e. the leaders of the Sanhedrin (Jewish Supreme Court) too will be descended from Davidic origin.

15. Even in later generations, i.e. *be-seyvah*, they will still be fruitbearing; though Israel's stature will be diminished the leaders in the galut will still be of Davidic descent. At a still later time, i.e. the

93 *The LORD is king, He is robed in grandeur; the LORD is robed, He is girded with strength.*
The world stands firm; it cannot be shaken.
[2]*Your throne stands firm from of old; from eternity You have existed.*
[3]*The ocean sounds, O LORD, the ocean sounds its thunder, the ocean sounds its pounding.*
[4]*Above the thunder of the mighty waters, more majestic than the breakers of the sea is the LORD, majestic on high.*
[5]*Your decrees are indeed enduring; holiness befits Your house, O LORD, for all times.*

messianic age, *deshaynim vera-annanim yihyu*, they will be full of sap and vigour.

16. My purpose is merely to proclaim the Lord's righteousness, – thereby putting myself down. I personally have not been worth preserving except for my offspring David in the distant future. It is better people should condemn me, than that they should accuse G'd of any wrongdoing. They should not say that G'd did not keep his word and showed Adam favour by not killing him on the day he had sinned. He did not show ME any favour, but did so for the sake of the future.

Psalm 93

1. It is customary for kings to display humility at the time they assume the throne, and to display kindness towards their subjects, in order to win their subjects' acceptance of their authority. We see an example of this in the advice given to Rachavam, son of Solomon by the elders. (Kings I, 12,7.)

Not so with the king of kings. When G'd assumes the mantle of king, He garbs Himself in *geyut*, majesty. Also His strength is not like the strength of mortal heroes who do not brag until after they have successfully accomplished something. (Kings I, 20,11) Rather, He can confidently gird Himself with strength, and yet He tolerates those who do not carry out His will; i.e. the world remains firmly established. He indulges Himself in being patient in order for the world to remain a going concern. This is not because He is unable to cope with those who disobey Him, "for Your throne is firmly established ever since the creation of the universe, and You are not

צג א יְהוָה מָלָךְ גֵּאוּת לָבֵשׁ לָבֵשׁ יְהוָה עֹז הִתְאַזָּר אַף-
תִּכּוֹן תֵּבֵל בַּל-תִּמּוֹט:
ב נָכוֹן כִּסְאֲךָ מֵאָז מֵעוֹלָם אָתָּה:
ג נָשְׂאוּ נְהָרוֹת יְהוָה נָשְׂאוּ נְהָרוֹת קוֹלָם יִשְׂאוּ נְהָרוֹת
דָּכְיָם:
ד מִקֹּלוֹת מַיִם רַבִּים אַדִּירִים מִשְׁבְּרֵי-יָם אַדִּיר בַּמָּרוֹם
יְהוָה:
ה עֵדֹתֶיךָ נֶאֶמְנוּ מְאֹד לְבֵיתְךָ נַאֲוָה-קֹדֶשׁ יְהוָה לְאֹרֶךְ
יָמִים:

subject to the dictates of time, and You have no need for the *tevel*, universe.

2. "Your throne therefore has always been firm, i.e. *me-olam*, part of the universe, not merely "above" the universe. If however, *hashem geyut lavesh*, the quality of mercy had only been garbed in majesty, i.e. above and aloof from the earth, then the earth would not have been able to endure.

3. Our sages, as well as later commentators, understand the word *neharot*, rivers, as referring to the 4 kingdoms. (who will rule over Israel during the various exiles) Compare Bereshit Rabbah, 16,4 that the river heads from the garden of Eden correspond to these 4 kingdoms.

4. The Psalmist Moses laments the fact that due to G'd's mercy having become a factor in running the universe, all these wicked kingdoms have a chance to raise their voices, *nasu neharot kolam*, to achieve prominence. He expresses the hope that *yissu neharot kolam*, that the fact that they exaggerate their oppressive rule over Israel like the irresistible waves of the oceans, may at least result in Israel meriting salvation. Should You G'd argue that the nations have to be given full reign, so that in due course when G'd performs miracles as He did before Israel's Exodus from Egypt, the name of G'd will be sanctified through our merit, this is not needed. G'd had once tossed Pharaoh into the sea, split the sea into 12 sections etc. All this had already proved the might of G'd, i.e. *adirim mishberey yam*, at a time when He also proved *adir bamarom*, His strength in the celestial regions.

5. Should G'd reply that the world has already forgotten the miracles of that period, Moses says *eydotecha ne-emnu*, the miracles

94 *God of retribution, LORD, God of retribution, appear!*
2Rise up, judge of the earth, give the arrogant their deserts!
3How long shall the wicked, O LORD, how long shall the wicked exult,
4shall they utter insolent speech, shall all evildoers vaunt themselves?
5They crush Your people, O LORD, they afflict Your very own;
6they kill the widow and the stranger; they murder the fatherless,
7thinking, "The LORD does not see it the God of Jacob does not pay heed."

that You have testified to in Your Torah have proven infinitely faithful, lasting. If, however, You will not bring redemption to us in response to the oppression by the nations, do it because of Your house, i.e. the holy temple which did not sin and yet was destroyed. But, Moses continues, I plead that this time the rebuilding of the temple should be *le-orech yamim*, for all times, not like previously, when the temple was destroyed a second time. The previous temple only enjoyed the Presence of the 2 lettered name of G'd, whereas the temple to be rebuilt will house the 4 lettered name of G'd, i.e. *Hashem*, not merely *kodesh*. This is why it will endure indefinitely.

Psalm 94

1. The repetition we find here is for emphasis. Israel, i.e. the Psalmist confronted with the excesses it suffers from its masters in exile, exclaims "I know that my troubles are due to the *Hashem*, i.e. to the quality of mercy with which G'd rules the earth. We wish for the quality of *el*, a reduced version of the quality of mercy. The excesses committed by G'd's enemies and therefore by my enemies, are due to the excessive mercy G'd displays. Repeating the call emphasizes that the Psalmist wants this manifestation of G'd immediately.

2. The reason is, to safeguard G'd's honour. *Geyim*, they are too arrogant. Our sages (Sotah 5) tell us concerning the verse "he who is haughty of eye and large of desire, I will not tolerate", to mean that G'd cannot exist in one and the same world as the haughty person. The Psalmist, in pointing to the arrogance of the oppressors, suggests their arrogance as the reason G'd should exercise His attribute as *shofet*, judge.

צד א אֵל-נְקָמוֹת יְהוָה אֵל נְקָמוֹת הוֹפִיעַ:
ב הִנָּשֵׂא שֹׁפֵט הָאָרֶץ הָשֵׁב גְּמוּל עַל-גֵּאִים:
ג עַד-מָתַי רְשָׁעִים יְהוָה עַד-מָתַי רְשָׁעִים יַעֲלֹזוּ:
ד יַבִּיעוּ יְדַבְּרוּ עָתָק יִתְאַמְּרוּ כָּל-פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן:
ה עַמְּךָ יְהוָה יְדַכְּאוּ וְנַחֲלָתְךָ יְעַנּוּ:
ו אַלְמָנָה וְגֵר יַהֲרֹגוּ וְיתוֹמִים יְרַצֵּחוּ:
ז וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא יִרְאֶה-יָהּ וְלֹא-יָבִין אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:

3. Since we have a tradition that when one rejoices over the misfortunes befalling one's adversaries, G'd in turn will vent His anger on those who rejoice, (compare Proverbs 24,17, and the Talmud Berachot 55 on this verse) the Psalmist appeals to G'd to punish the wicked because they are guilty of enjoying Israel's misfortunes.

4. They first indulged in *dibbur*, talk against Israel. When they observed G'd's inaction, they were encouraged to act against Israel.

5. First, they test G'd by attacking those Jews who are not close to You though they bear Your name, i.e. *amcha*, Your people. Later, when they see that You do not react, *nachalatcha Ye-annu*, they oppress even those Jews who are genuinely Your inheritance, i.e. Torah observing Jews, the ones who have remained in Zion, Your *nachalah*.

6. When they see that You still do not react, they feel encouraged to attack even those people who are reputed to be under Your special protection, i.e. the widows and orphans.

7. When they still do not encounter a reaction from You, they become convinced that the reason for Your inaction is simply that You are unaware, and do not comprehend what they are doing. They conclude that though G'd has created 2 worlds, i.e. the physical universe and the celestial, spiritual regions by using His two lettered name *Yud* and *heh*, the density of the earth's atmosphere has prevented Him from seeing what is going on on earth.

We have a tradition that Jacob – in the Heavens – is sensitive to all that happens to his descendants on earth, and brings his concern to G'd's attention. (compare Eychah Rabbati on Lamentations 2,3 "it burned inside Jacob".) If G'd does not punish the antisemites despite all this, it must be because the G'd of Jacob does not understand. The Psalmist challenges G'd to enact retribution for this desecration of His name!

[8]*Take heed, you most brutish people; fools, when will you get wisdom?*
[9]*Shall He who implants the ear not hear, He who forms the eye not see?*
[10]*Shall He who disciplines nations not punish, He who instructs men in knowledge?*
[11]*The LORD knows the designs of men to be futile.*
[12]*Happy is the man whom You discipline, O LORD, the man You instruct in Your teaching,*
[13]*to give him tranquility in times of misfortune, until a pit be dug for the wicked.*
[14]*For the LORD will not forsake His people; He will not abandon His very own.*

8. The Psalmist addresses himself to his people, expressing concern that some of the arguments used by the nations to explain the alleged inactivity of G'd, would find an echo amongst them. He therefore calls on them "display some sense, ignorant ones among the people!"

Errors of judgment may be due to either of 2 causes. 1) Lack of *deyah*, intelligence, education. 2) Disdain for Torah study even by the intelligent people. If the nations who speak evil of G'd do not understand the workings of His *hashgachah*, Providence, at least the ignorant Israelites, *boarim* should display some understanding! The fools amongst the Jewish people who hate education etc., when will they acquire some brains?! The Psalmist holds out more hope for the ignorant than for the fools.

9. He exhorts the people to realize that G'd's silence could not be due to a lack of faculties on His part, since surely He who can grant hearing to others, i.e. *hanota ozen*, must Himself be able to hear! Similarly, how can one argue that He who provides eyesight, cannot see?

10. Should you ask that if all this is so, why does G'd suffer all these planners of evil, and doers of evil? The answer is that He who has disciplined mighty Pharaoh etc. will surely teach the nations, i.e. *yochiach*, how wrong they are!

11. G'd's thoughts are not like man's; He knows man's thoughts before they have been formed, even when they are still *hevel*, have not yet crystallized. How could you therefore believe that you know something that I do not know, that you approach Me saying "I should not be so patient with these nations"! Besides, if I am aware of man physically (something alien to My nature, since I am spiritual), I am

ח בִּינוּ בֹעֲרִים בָּעָם וּכְסִילִים מָתַי תַּשְׂכִּילוּ׃
ט הֲנֹטַע אֹזֶן הֲלֹא יִשְׁמָע אִם-יֹצֵר עַיִן הֲלֹא יַבִּיט׃
י הֲיֹסֵר גּוֹיִם הֲלֹא יוֹכִיחַ הַמְלַמֵּד אָדָם דָּעַת׃
יא יְהוָה יֹדֵעַ מַחְשְׁבוֹת אָדָם כִּי-הֵמָּה הָבֶל׃
יב אַשְׁרֵי הַגֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר-תְּיַסְּרֶנּוּ יָהּ וּמִתּוֹרָתְךָ תְלַמְּדֶנּוּ׃
יג לְהַשְׁקִיט לוֹ מִימֵי רָע עַד יִכָּרֶה לָרָשָׁע שָׁחַת׃
יד כִּי לֹא-יִטֹּשׁ יְהוָה עַמּוֹ וְנַחֲלָתוֹ לֹא יַעֲזֹב׃

surely aware of man's thoughts etc., since thoughts being abstract such awareness would be easier for Me since I Myself am abstract!

12. Moses, the author of this Psalm, refers in a vision to the time when G'd will exact retribution from Amalek. At that time His 2 lettered name will be augmented by the other 2 letters. Meanwhile, He exercises restraint and patience. Moses tells Israel *mitoratcha telamdenu*, You, i.e. G'd have taught Israel to be patient just as He is patient though he has said that His throne cannot be whole while the struggle against Amalek is still in progress. (Exodus 17,16) The timing of the redemption depends on *midor dor*, on respective generations and their merit. Israel is lucky, i.e. *ashrey* – since whatever their trials they have G'd's example to draw on, and can draw encouragement from this.

13. The length of time Israel suffers afflictions is written in Your Torah, i.e. the punishment of the gentile nations is suspended until a grave is dug for the wicked, i.e. Amalek, whose fall is delayed from generation to generation as spelled out in Exodus 17,16, awaiting a guilt free generation of Jews. We know that no nation has been defeated until its *sar*, its spiritual counterpart at the throne of G'd has been defeated. Amalek's *sar*, is Samael, i.e. the evil urge. As long as Israel commits transgressions against the Torah, the spiritual representative of Amalek remains strong, and our sins help make him stronger. He will not fall until we (Israel) have repented thus weakening his power. Our *mitzvah* performance and our good deeds are what dig Satan's = Amalek's grave. Our afflictions are designed meanwhile to alert us to the need to repent and bring about Satan's final demise.

14. Another thing that Your Torah teaches us is that G'd does not abandon His people, since G'd has sworn NOT to join the other 2 letters of His name until He has taken revenge on Amalek, something that depends on developments from generation to generation. Since

15 Judgment shall again accord with justice and all the upright shall rally to it.
16 Who will take my part against evil men?
Who will stand up for me against wrongdoers?
17 Were not the LORD my help, I should soon dwell in silence.

that is so, you can learn a *kal vechomer*, i.e. a fortiori. If G'd does not worry about His name being desecrated, being incomplete because of what is happening to His people, and He does not abandon His people in order to exalt His name, how much less has a loyal Jew the right to abandon hope for his people! (and assume that G'd has abandoned the Jewish people)

When the prophet Samuel I 12,22 says "for G'd (4 lettered name) will not abandon His people, since He had once agreed, i.e. *ho-il* to make Israel His people", the meaning is that G'd has made the manifestation of his 4 lettered name contingent on Israel being His people. The time for G'd to avenge what Amalek does to us, MUST arrive therefore in its due course.

15. Should one ask how much persecution and affliction must Israel endure without detesting their fate, the answer is *ad tzedek yashuv mishpat*, until it does righteous deeds and restores justice. *Yissurim*, sufferings, are the inverse of *mishpat*, justice. Once Israel has been brought back to the right path, i.e. *mishpat*, it will realize that what it had considered to have been afflictions, sufferings, had in fact been acts of *tzedakah*, righteousness by G'd, since through suffering these experiences it had found the way to it salvation. *acharav kol yishrey lev*, all this righteousness at the end, *acharav*, was merely the result of the sufferings endured first.

16. The holy spirit speaking on behalf of G'd exclaims that he wishes someone would arise, *yakum*, and enable G'd to hasten this process of becoming *el nekamot*, the G'd who avenges Amalek's deeds. Even if there remain some evil doers, *merey-im* in Israel, G'd waits for a man whose merits suffice for Him to put in motion His long delayed plan to deal Amalek a death blow. Who of the *tzaddikim*, the righteous people, will place himself on My side so that even if there are still some *poaley aven*, sinners, the balance tips in favour of My revealing Myself as the *el nekamot*, the G'd who avenges. A different approach to verses 8–16 is that it is a dialogue in which G'd points out that instead of their disgust with their oppressors, they should study Torah and live accordingly, and their afflictions would cease. Israel's argument that Torah is too difficult,

טז כִּי-עַד צֶדֶק יָשׁוּב מִשְׁפָּט וְאַחֲרָיו כָּל-יִשְׁרֵי-לֵב:
יז מִי-יָקוּם לִי עִם-מְרֵעִים מִי-יִתְיַצֵּב לִי עִם-פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן:
יח לוּלֵי יְהוָה עֶזְרָתָה לִּי כִּמְעַט שָׁכְנָה דוּמָה נַפְשִׁי:

and that the persecutions they have suffered in exile do not allow them time to study it, is turned aside by G'd, who says *ha-melamed le-adam da-at*, G'd teaches man understanding – if man WANTS to study and understand.

Concerning the lack of opportunity to study Torah due to the afflictions being suffered in exile, G'd confirms that Torah – being precious – is one of the things attained only through deprivations. Normally man pursues *hevel*, vanities throughout the greater part of his life. G'd knows i.e. *yodea machashavot*. It is not accidental that it is said of material wealth (Proverbs 3,16) *bi-semolo osher vechavod* that it is on the left side, instead of the right side. When the Torah complained before G'd why the Torah scholars are usually poor, G'd replied that if they were wealthy they would be tempted to devote their time to preserve and increase their wealth. Hence, *ashrey hagever asher teyassrenu Koh*, lucky the man whom G'd subjects to deprivations. It is good for such people to suffer deprivations during exile since they teach man to abandon the kind of pursuits which will gain him nothing in the long run. Instead he will devote himself to Torah and learn FROM Torah how to cope with deprivations. While IN EXILE, he need not be better off than his Maker, who shares exile with the Jewish people. (Introduction to Eychah Rabbati).

17. Should we reply that our sages say that Torah is a shield against afflictions and deprivations i.e. *u-veney reshef yagbihu of*, (Job 5,7) that *of*=Torah raises up the demons and deflects them, (compare Berachot 5) the answer is that it is true that Torah study results in *le-hashkit lo mi yemey ra*, to let rest come to him from the days of evil; however, such a result is NOT IMMEDIATE, but when a grave is dug for the wicked, i.e. the evil urge.

There is a strange Midrash Rabbah (Bereshit 92,8) in which Rabbi Alexandri states that there is no person who does not suffer some *yissurim*, afflictions. Hail to the person who is afflicted, since it says (Psalms 94,12) "from Your Torah You will teach him". Rabbi Alexandri's words seem incomprehensible. If ALL persons suffer afflictions, it follows that the *ashrey*, hail, applies to each and every person! It is not something distinctive, selective! Why would it be phrased as applying to individuals only, i.e. "hail THE man"? instead of "hail all men"!?

18*When I think my foot has given way, Your faithfulness, O LORD, supports me.*
19*When I am filled with cares, Your assurance soothes my soul.*
20*Shall the seat of injustice be Your partner, that frames mischief by statute?*
21*They band together to do away with the righteous; they condemn the innocent to death.*
22*But the LORD is my haven; my God is my sheltering rock.*

Besides, wherein lies this "happiness"? How does Rabbi Alexandri derive this from the words "and from Your Torah You teach us"?

His meaning is that men generally experience deprivations, afflictions, as stated in Job 5,7 "man is born to suffering". However, if a person's deprivations and afflictions are over and beyond the normal problems one experiences in life, such a person can consider himself happy when the *yissurim*, afflictions do not stop or hinder him from engaging in study of Your Torah. In addition, such a person will not experience these afflictions all his life, but *le-hashkit lo mi yemey ra*, his Torah study will bring him relief from the days of evil.

17. We have stated that these Psalms including Psalm 100 were composed by Moses. Up until now, Moses has lamented the troubles that Israel will experience during the various exiles. To this G'd had replied that repentance is required as well as Torah, afflictions and justice, else Israel would not have sufficient merit for G'd to be able to depose the oppressor nations from their positions of preeminence.

To this Moses counters, do it for Your sake O Lord". I know, says Moses, from personal experience in Egypt that even if I had no sins, unless G'd had assisted me and saved me from the sword of Pharaoh, I would almost have died, i.e. *kim-at shachnah*. If I had to depend on Your help when righteous, how much more does Israel depend on Your help seeing they are in the hands of their captors due to their sins! Alternatively, the help of G'd is needed as a buttress against the *yetzer hara*, the evil urge.

18. Since I admitted that my foot has slipped on occasion, i.e. that only Your kindness has upheld me, how much more so Israel who are in distress and need Your help! There is no reason then to be surprised that Israel has sunk into sin and needs Your help.

19. Moses reviews what had troubled his heart when he had observed Israel's sufferings at the hands of the Egyptians; he says "I was torn by internal conflict about when G'd would finally redeem

יח אִם-אָמַרְתִּי מָטָה רַגְלִי חַסְדְּךָ יְהוָה יִסְעָדֵנִי׃
יט בְּרֹב שַׂרְעַפַּי בְּקִרְבִּי תַּנְחוּמֶיךָ יְשַׁעֲשְׁעוּ נַפְשִׁי׃
כ הֲיִחְבָּרְךָ כִּסֵּא הַוּוֹת יֹצֵר עָמָל עָלֵי-חֹק׃
כא יָגוֹדּוּ עַל-נֶפֶשׁ צַדִּיק וְדָם נָקִי יַרְשִׁיעוּ׃
כב וַיְהִי יְהוָה לִי לְמִשְׂגָּב וֵאלֹהַי לְצוּר מַחְסִי׃

Israel". Your assurance that you would be actively involved in the fight against Amalek reassured me, i.e. *tanchumecha*, Your words of comfort. It taught me that in the course of generations Israel would accumulate the merits necessary to be totally redeemed.

20. The thought which made my soul rejoice is the knowledge that You will certainly NOT exchange us for any other nation. For, how could You combine Your incomplete name with the throne of *havvot*, destruction, mischief, i.e. with a nation other than Israel when those nations enshrine their wickedness in making it official policy, law! i.e. *yotzer amal aley chok*!

Israel after all, through performance of good deeds will convert Your *kess* incomplete throne, to *kisseh* a proper throne, and enable *Koh*, i.e. the 2 lettered name to be joined with the *vav heh* to make it whole. Your throne can only be made whole by the observance of Your statutes. In other words *kisseh* can only be joined *yechavrechah aley chok*, by statutes.

21. Take a look at THEIR kind of social legislations, *mishpatim*. They gang up on the soul of the righteous in order to cause him to sin, so that the righteous will forfeit his soul; they exhort him to serve idols, threatening him with the choice of physical or spiritual death.

22. Moses again addresses the Jews in exile, saying that he is certain that G'd will treat them well, since he has personal experience of having been saved by G'd from the sword of Pharaoh, as we explained on Proverbs 18,10 "the name of G'd is a tower of strength and continuation. He who takes refuge from his enemy in a tower, i.e. a building, is like locking himself in a prison, whereas he who makes G'd his refuge can run and feel safe." It was Moses who had run to Midian and there he felt safe.

Until he escaped, he was exposed to the free willed people, i.e. Pharaoh had been able to exercise his desire to kill Moses. At that time, *elokay letzur machssi*, my G'd became the rock of my refuge, i.e. He made my neck as hard as rock so that Pharaoh's sword was blunted. (compare Midrash Rabbah 1,35 on Exodus 2,15).

23*He will make their evil recoil upon them, annihilate them through their own wickedness; the LORD our God will annihilate them.*

95 *Come, let us sing joyously to the LORD, raise a shout for our rock and deliverer;*
2*let us come into His presence with praise; let us raise a shout for Him in song!*
3*For the LORD is a great God, the great king of all divine beings.*
4*In His hand are the depths of the earth; the peaks of the mountains are His.*

23. He turned their own might against them. They thought they had acted cleverly in throwing Jewish boy babies into the Nile to drown them. They had believed themselves safe from G'd's retaliation since G'd had promised not to bring another deluge. Instead, G'd led THEM (their might, their armies) INTO the waters. He did not need to make the waters come to THEM. (compare Exodus 14,27, when Egypt rushed TOWARDS the sea.) The nations torturing Israel during its exile will experience that their treatment of Israel will backfire in a similar manner. *Uvera-atom yatzmitem*; by their very wickedness, He will destroy them.

Psalm 95

1. This Psalm is addressed to Moses' contemporaries, i.e. the generation of the desert who had forfeited the right to enter the land of Israel. Moses consoles these people saying "let us praise the Lord and jubilate, since both you and I will be resurrected and come to the land of Israel at that time. The word *lechu*, go! refers to Moses urging the people to go to their graves in the desert willingly. Do not be sad, for *neranenah*, you and I both will have a chance to sing to the 4 lettered name of G'd. After that however, *nariah* (from the root *kara*, kneeling,) we need to display humility before the Rock of our salvation, i.e. G'd's attribute of justice.

2. These people respond to Moses by saying "why should we have to leave this world confident that we can sing to the Lord in a distant future, better that we should mend our evil ways NOW and go to the land of Israel with our brethren, (the younger generation) and confess". (*Betodah=beviduy*, not the usual "thanks") compare

כג וַיָּשֶׁב עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת-אוֹנָם וּבְרָעָתָם יַצְמִיתֵם יַצְמִיתֵם
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ׃

צה א לְכוּ נְרַנְּנָה לַיהוָה נָרִיעָה לְצוּר יִשְׁעֵנוּ׃
ב נְקַדְּמָה פָנָיו בְּתוֹדָה בִּזְמִרוֹת נָרִיעַ לוֹ׃
ג כִּי אֵל גָּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים׃
ד אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ מֶחְקְרֵי-אָרֶץ וְתוֹעֲפוֹת הָרִים לוֹ׃

Joshua 7,1, *ten lo todah*, make a confession to Him. Once G'd accepts our remorse, *bizmirot naria lo*, we will sing to Him noisily. All of this will be directed at the attribute of mercy, i.e. *Lo*, the *tzur yisheynu*. We will remain humble, but we trust that the *Hashem*, i.e. attribute of mercy will be of value to us."

They suggest, – not like Moses did – i.e. first *neran-nena* and then *naria*, but the reverse order. After their remorse has been accepted *bizmirot naria lo* to the quality of mercy who has accepted our confession!

3. Although G'd is *melech*, king, i.e. judge, and during the 10 days from New Year's till the Day of Atonement, the days of penitence, we remind ourselves of this fact by inserting several references to G'd's being king in the daily *amidah* prayer, nonetheless He is *el gadol Hashem*, He is full of kindness, and this attribute overshadows the attribute of justice, i.e. *al kol elokim*, whenever this attribute of justice is in evidence. Even when G'd exacted punishment from the Egyptians, (Exodus 12,12) He still signed Himself as *Hashem*, i.e. the attribute of mercy was still predominant. He does not want His glory to consist of the justice he metes out, appearing as an angry G'd.

4. This generation confesses that their fear of the Emorite in the mountain, and the Amalekite in the South (Numbers 13,29) had been unjustified in view of the fact that *mech-keray aretz* even the most distant places on earth and *toafot harim* apparitions of mountains which have not even been seen, whose existence is only surmised through *mech-kerey* = *chakirot* scientific research, are His. If so, the mountains which are nearby, visible, *toafot*, are certainly His and under His supervision. He would have delivered the Canaanites into our hands, and our fear was our sin.

5. His hands shaped the earth, including the land of Israel, and He made the seas. Originally, 2/3 of the globe had been covered by dry

5His is the sea, He made it; and the land, which His hands fashioned.
6Come, let us bow down and kneel, bend the knee before the LORD our maker,
7for He is our God, and we are the people He tends, the flock in His care.
O, if you would but heed His charge this day:
8Do not be stubborn as at Meribah, as on the day of Massah, in the wilderness,
9when your fathers put Me to the test, tried Me, though they had seen My deeds.
10Forty years I was provoked by that generation; I thought, "They are a senseless people; they would not know My ways."
11Concerning them I swore in anger, "They shall never come to My resting-place!"

land. During the generation of Enosh, G'd expanded the sea, so that only 1/3 of the globe remained as dry land. The reason He did not flood MORE of the earth is that His own hand shaped the *yabeshet*, i.e. *eretz Yisrael*, the land of Israel. The reason the land of Israel is called *yabeshet*, dry land, is, that even during the deluge in the days of Noah, this land was not flooded. (Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1,65) This is hinted at in the letter *tav* at the end of the word *yabashah*, i.e. *yabeshet* instead of *yabashah*. The land of Israel comprises 400 by 400 *parsaot* square miles approx. according to our sages.

Our sages (Midrash Shocher tov) say that the first part of the dry land which was created (revealed) was *eretz Yisrael*, the remainder of the dry land expanding gradually in three directions outwards from the land of Israel. This is based on Proverbs 8,26, "before He had made the earth and its surroundings".

6 and 7. Moses replied to them saying: this is why I said to you "let us worship, humble ourselves", and await resurrection in the future. But you thought you could achieve forgiveness right here and now merely through confession". Since G'd had ALREADY given us a second life span after we had died momentarily at Mount Sinai when we had proved incapable of absorbing His revelation, *Hashem oseynu*, He has made US, i.e. this generation of the desert has already been resurrected once, Moses agrees, i.e. *bo-u*, come let us prostrate ourselves etc. Seeing that G'd has done so much more for us already than for the rest of mankind (as expressed in verse 7), we

ה אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ הַיָּם וְהוּא עָשָׂהוּ וְיַבֶּשֶׁת יָדָיו יָצָרוּ׃
ו בֹּאוּ נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְנִכְרָעָה נִבְרְכָה לִפְנֵי-יְהוָה עֹשֵׂנוּ׃
ז כִּי-הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ וַאֲנַחְנוּ עַם מַרְעִיתוֹ וְצֹאן יָדוֹ הַיּוֹם
אִם-בְּקֹלוֹ תִשְׁמָעוּ׃
ח אַל-תַּקְשׁוּ לְבַבְכֶם כִּמְרִיבָה כְּיוֹם מַסָּה בַּמִּדְבָּר׃
ט אֲשֶׁר נִסּוּנִי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בְּחָנוּנִי גַּם-רָאוּ פָּעָלִי׃
י אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה אָקוּט בְּדוֹר וָאֹמַר עַם תֹּעֵי לֵבָב הֵם
וְהֵם לֹא-יָדְעוּ דְרָכָי׃
יא אֲשֶׁר-נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי בְאַפִּי אִם-יְבֹאוּן אֶל-מְנוּחָתִי׃

must do far MORE than merely confess our errors. If we do so, maybe – *hayom im bekolo tishma-u*, G'd will forgive today if you truly listen to His voice, and not as I suggested in verse 2.

8. To these words of Moses, the holy spirit speaking in the name of G'd replies *al takshu* do not be obstinate. At Merivah you had already done *teshuvah* penitence, also at Massah in the desert.

9. There is no reason for Me to believe that your penitence NOW will be any more resolute, final, than on the previous occasions when I have forgiven you. Whenever your fathers tested Me, it was after they had seen *bechanuni po-oli*, that I had been gracious in My works, i.e. had not withheld the Manna from you even after they had committed the sin of the golden calf.

10. I concluded that I would quarrel with this generation for 40 years, since I ascribe their behaviour to an erring heart, that they did not know My ways. *Levav*, their problem is the *yetzer hara*, the dual heart. We have a tradition that a person does not thoroughly understand all his teacher tries to teach him, until he has studied with him for 40 years, (based on Deut. 29,3 Talmud Avodah Zarah 5)

11. However, I do not let you go out emptyhanded. Though I have sworn that you will not come to *menuchati*, the land of My rest, this is only as long as you have no one from whose merit you can benefit. Once Moses will be resurrected and enter the land of Israel, – you will be resurrected also, thanks to his merit. This is what our sages had in mind when they said that when Moses comes in the future, he will bring the generation of the *yotzey mitzrayim*, the generation of the Exodus, with him. (Pesikta zutrati Deut. 1,37).

96 *Sing to the LORD a new song, sing to the LORD, all the earth.*
2Sing to the LORD, bless His name, proclaim His victory day after day.
3Tell of His glory among the nations, His wondrous deeds, among all peoples.
4For the LORD is great and much acclaimed, He is held in awe by all divine beings.
5All the gods of the peoples are mere idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

Psalm 96

1. These Psalms all discuss the time of the final redemption. It is worth remembering the statement of the prophet (Jeremiah 16,14–15) "in those days, G'd will not be referred to as the One who took Israel out of Egypt, but He will be acknowledged as the Living G'd who has taken Israel out from the Northern country and from all the other countries He had cast them out into, and who has brought them back to this soil etc." We will no longer have to content ourselves with praising G'd for something He has done for us in the distant past, but the new song will extol G'd's greatness in such a fashion that there is no need to support it by referring to ancient history.

His achievements at that time will eclipse all that has gone before. In Egypt, G'd's manifestations were restricted to the land of Egypt. Similarly, miracles performed for Israel throughout history have been of a local variety. However, during messianic times, G'd's miracles will fill the whole earth, as we read (Yoel 3,3) "I will perform miracles in heaven and on earth, blood fire and smoke".

2. Since the Psalmist calls on ALL nations to sing praises to G'd, how will Israel still be distinctive? The Psalmist therefore calls on Israel separately ***shiru lashem, – barchu shemo***, may G'd grant you prophetic stature, i.e. you will relate His deliverance on a daily basis as stated in Yoel 3,1 "your sons and daughters will prophesy, your elders will dream dreams, and your youngsters will see visions". This is a promise that does not apply to the gentile nations. By your blessing G'd, you strengthen the spirit of G'd, which draws down His bounty from the celestial storage chamber. ***Barchu shemo***, bless His name, may be a reference to Israel's contribution to the reunification of G'd's name, i.e. the ***yud, heh***, and the ***vav,heh***, by means of this new song. By eliminating the power of ***tum-ah*** impurity of the spiritual counterpart of Amalek, you will feel how G'd's salvation

צו א שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חָדָשׁ שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ:
ב שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה בָּרְכוּ שְׁמוֹ בַּשְּׂרוּ מִיּוֹם-לְיוֹם יְשׁוּעָתוֹ:
ג סַפְּרוּ בַגּוֹיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ בְּכָל-הָעַמִּים נִפְלְאוֹתָיו:
ד כִּי גָדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד נוֹרָא הוּא עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים:
ה כִּי כָּל-אֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אֱלִילִים וַיהוָה שָׁמַיִם עָשָׂה:

assumes greater and greater dimensions. *miyom leyom*, from day to day.

3. When Israel asks the Psalmist how they should praise the Lord in the meantime, pending the advent of the Messiah, in order that the nations should ease up in their treatment of them, the Psalmist says "tell the nations of G'd's glory".

The word *goyim* applies to the exile Israel underwent in Babylonia, when they had lived in one area. *beyn ha-amim*, amongst the nations, refers to the exile of the Persians when Israel lived scattered throughout the Persian Empire (as we know from the book of Esther). In Babylonia the Jews were able to point to the miracle G'd had performed for Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah. The reason it does not say *et* in front of the word *kevodo*, His glory, may be that the word *et* would have included Israel as having had a share in G'd's glory, something hardly the case. When Israel pointed to the greatness of its G'd, the Babylonians derided them for having abandoned such a great G'd. (Talmud Sanhedrin 92.) This is why the *et* may be missing in this instance.

4. Should one ask what need is there to tell the nations of G'd's greatness, after all they had all been aware of this?, the Psalmist answers that though this is undoubtedly true, the fact remains that He is held in awe only by *kol elohim*, i.e. the deities, such as the sun and moon whom they serve. But the nations who serve those deities act as if they are unaware of the Power behind these agents of G'd whom they worship. They need to be told that the Lord is far more awe-inspiring than the powers which they serve out of awe.

5. All these powers, i.e. the idols, are nothing, *eli-lim*, from *al*, a negative force, powers which basically ten to deny rather than grant largesse.

To the question why G'd does not destroy these idols, if they are so helpless and ineffective, we must reply in the same manner as the sages in the Talmud Avodah Zarah 54, are reported to have answered the Romans. They said that G'd does not see a reason to

6Glory and majesty are before Him; strength and splendor are in His temple.
7Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
8Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name, bring tribute and enter His courts.
9Bow down to the LORD majestic in holiness; tremble in His presence, all the earth!

deprive the world of the benefits of the sun the moon and all the other manifestations of His power in nature, simply because some fools choose to worship such phenomena in their own right. To destroy them therefore would hardly be more intelligent than the foolishness of treating them as deities. This is why the Psalmist emphasizes that G'd has created the world of galaxies.

6. Having been told to proclaim the grandeur of G'd amongst the nations, these nations may ask where G'd's grandeur is, seeing He allowed His sanctuary to be destroyed, and He did nothing to punish those who have destroyed the temple. To this the Psalmist replies that His ability to restrain expression of His anger is His very strength. Punishment of the gentiles who prance around on the site of the former temple has been delayed only due to the lack of merit on the part of Israel. Had there been a sufficient number of good people amongst Israel, their merit would have saved the temple. ***hod ve-hadar lefanav***, only if glory and majesty, i.e. ***tzaddikim*** are walking before Him, can His strength and beauty become manifest in His sanctuary, ***vetiferet bemikdasho***.

G'd had to vent His anger on the temple, otherwise He would have had to totally annihilate the Jewish nation due to their lack of personal merit, and due to the absence of men of merit in their midst. We are told that there are no ***chatzotrot*** trumpets except in the temple. Since it says in Psalm 98,6 (compare Yalkut Shimoni on that verse) "with trumpets and Shofar sound pay homage in the Presence of the Lord", the inference is that the ***tzaddik*** is the ***hod*** and the ***hiddur***, the beauty of the city in which he dwells. When, however, there are no ***tzaddikim***, righteous men, such as at the time of the ***churban***, the destruction of the temple, His ***oz***, power, was devoid of ***tiferet***, beauty, and He remained passive. G'd's passivity when provoked can be His very ***gevurotav***, valour and strength.

7. If not all of the gentile nations will heed your praise of the Lord, at least ***havu lashem mishpechot amim***, give to the Lord some of the families of nations, so that they will not only be aware of G'd's power

ו הוֹד-וְהָדָר לְפָנָיו עֹז וְתִפְאֶרֶת בְּמִקְדָּשׁוֹ:
ז הָבוּ לַיהוָה מִשְׁפְּחוֹת עַמִּים הָבוּ לַיהוָה כָּבוֹד וָעֹז:
ח הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ שְׂאוּ-מִנְחָה וּבֹאוּ לְחַצְרוֹתָיו:
ט הִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לַיהוָה בְּהַדְרַת-קֹדֶשׁ חִילוּ מִפָּנָיו כָּל-הָאָרֶץ:

but will accord Him honour. These nations at least will not torment Israel, seeing in them G'd's nation.

Also, it is important to realize that power and honour are not to be accorded to different attributes of G'd respectively, i.e. power to *elokim* and honour to *Hashem*, but BOTH attributes of G'd are to be accorded BOTH power and honour.

8. Gradually you will develop and establish a proper faith. After you accord both honour and power to both attributes of G'd, and have appreciated that only the 4 lettered version of G'd's name is deserving of worship, you will have understood that G'd is a single unity, embraces all aspects of the G'dhead. You must no longer even use the term *elohim* for any of the so called deities even while you are aware of the total impotence of such so called deities. The very term *elohim* is a misappropriation of a title that belongs only to the one and only G'd. (all this is addressed to the gentile nations)

You, i.e. the nations of the world, should not argue that since converts will not be accepted during the messianic era, (Talmud Yebamot 24) what difference does it make what you believe? The Psalmist replies that if to you just like to Israel, i.e. *u-va-u chatzrotav.* Compare Isaiah 66,20–21 "they will bring an offering with all your brethren.. and I will also take them as priests, says the Lord." Representatives of the gentile nations will enjoy the right to bring offerings to the courtyard of the temple, if not like priests who perform the service INSIDE the sanctuary, at least on a footing comparable to ordinary Israelites. This is why the Psalmist advises "carry your gift offerings and enter His courtyards."

9. The Psalmist continues addressing the gentile nations, pointing out that there is no other deity, and that they can consider themselves fortunate to be allowed to enter the courtyards of the sanctuary. In other words it is THEY who are receiving a *minchah* gift from G'd. To this the nations might respond by saying that since the whole earth is full of His glory, what special privilege is it for us to be allowed to worship in the courtyards of the sanctuary? They could do so anywhere on the globe!

10 *Declare among the nations, "The LORD is king!" the*
world stands firm; it cannot be shaken; He judges the
peoples with equity.
11 *Let the heavens rejoice and the earth exult; let the sea*
and all within it thunder,
12 *the fields and everything in them exult; then shall all*
the trees of the forest shout for joy
13 *at the presence of the LORD, for He is coming, for He*
is coming to rule the earth; He will rule the world justly
and its peoples in faithfulness.

97 *The LORD is king!*
Let the earth exult, the many islands rejoice!

The Psalmist replies that indeed they could, but His glory is manifest only in this place, ***behadrat kodesh***. The miracles that have occurred there while the temple was standing (compare Midrash Avot 5,8) and will occur there again, make only that place suitable for prostrating yourselves before Him. However, ***chilu mipanav kol ha-aretz*** display fear and awe before Him, because He is all over the earth, i.e. ***kol ha-aretz***; do not restrict your awe to when you believe you are in His presence in the holy temple.

10. It is well known that the title king implies sitting in judgment. This is why during the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, we insert references in our ***amidah*** prayer to underline G'd's role as King. Having said that all idol worshippers henceforth will believe only in the one and only G'd exclusively, and that people will no longer worship other deities, the Psalmist now tells the people how they will benefit by their new found faith. Should G'd judge the universe prior to your accepting Him, the earth itself may be on the verge of collapse, due to His anger. Once G'd has been enthroned as king however, i.e. ***Hashem malach***, even when He is angry, ***af***, the universe will remain firm and stable, ***tikon tevel***. G'd then will judge all nations ***be-meysharim***, employing kindness and mercy.

11. The Heavens and the earth will rejoice that they need not become the instruments of the nations' destruction, something which would have caused them sorrow. Only in the sea will there be ***ra-am***, roaring, since the ***sar shel yam***, the spiritual representative of the sea at the celestial Court remembers the first time G'd descended into the physical world, and how the sea was split at that time. He is afraid that the sea will be split once more.

י אִמְרוּ בַגּוֹיִם מָלָךְ אַף-תִּכּוֹן תֵּבֵל בַּל-תִּמּוֹט יָדִין
עַמִּים בְּמֵישָׁרִים:
יא יִשְׂמְחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְתָגֵל הָאָרֶץ יִרְעַם הַיָּם וּמְלֹאוֹ:
יב יַעֲלֹז שָׂדַי וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ אָז יְרַנְּנוּ כָּל-עֲצֵי-יָעַר:
יג לִפְנֵי יְהוָה כִּי בָא כִּי בָא לִשְׁפֹּט הָאָרֶץ יִשְׁפֹּט תֵּבֵל
בְּצֶדֶק וְעַמִּים בֶּאֱמוּנָתוֹ:

צז א יְהוָה מָלָךְ תָּגֵל הָאָרֶץ יִשְׂמְחוּ אִיִּים רַבִּים:

12. The fields, the trees, all that is in them, i.e. the animals, will rejoice then – since the curse that earth had been afflicted with at the time of Adam's sin will be lifted from the earth at that time. Even the carnivorous beasts will no longer feed on other living creatures in order to sustain themselves. (compare Isaiah 11,7) The forests will jubilate since also the non fruit bearing trees will start producing edible fruit at that time.

13. All of this, because from then on *mishpat*, justice will be administered by *Hashem*, the attribute of mercy, instead of the attribute of justice. Should you query that it is written *Hashem* descended to see the city", (Genesis 11,5) and the result was the fierce anger of G'd, the Psalmist repeats *ki ba*, that the last time He had come (to earth) to judge it, had been because mankind as a whole had been wicked, whereas now He will come to judge a *tevel*, a universe which as already qualified for the title *tevel betzedek*, i.e. a righteous universe, and the nations already have expressed their faith in Him exclusively.

Psalm 97

1. In the previous hymn, Moses the author of this group of Psalms, had said that once G'd's rule would come about, the Heavens and the earth would rejoice, due to the largesse of G'd that would be bestowed on the world at that time. Now he adds that what he had said referred to the distant islands, which had never caused Israel any harm. The inhabitants of those islands would be happy.

2. Not so the nearby islands which are surrounded by various types of dark clouds, i.e. forces depicting G'd's anger. These are the islands whose inhabitants had mistreated Israel, and had observed

2Dense clouds are around Him, righteousness and justice
are the base of His throne.
3Fire is His vanguard, burning His foes on every side.
4His lightnings light up the world; the earth is convulsed
at the sight;
5mountains melt like wax at the LORD's presence, at the
presence of the Lord of all the earth.
6The heavens proclaim His righteousness and all peoples
see His glory.
7All who worship images, who vaunt their idols, are
dismayed; all divine beings bow down to Him.
8Zion, hearing it, rejoices, the towns of Judah exult,
because of Your judgments, O LORD.

how G'd differentiated in His treatment of the righteous and those who have oppressed them. He refers to the righteous at the time of redemption, whose exemplary behaviour has enabled Zion to be redeemed through "justice and its residents through *tzedakah*, charity (Isaiah 1,27). They are the ones who will then become the carriers of G'd's entourage, the *Shechinah*, taking pleasure in the "fire before Him", i.e. warming themselves, even though this fire is *esh ochlah* a fire which consumes the wicked at the same time.

3. It goes without saying that this fire which provides warmth and pleasure for the righteous, spreads out and burns the wicked, Israel's oppressors.

4. This phenomenon need not surprise anyone, since at *matan Torah*, the revelation at Mount Sinai, a similar phenomenon had been observed. At that time His lightning had lit up the universe, and 2 contradictory manifestations were observed simultaneously. The inhabitants of the earth were able to watch this phenomenon, whereas the earth itself when it observed what was happening, *vatachel*, went into travail, suffered contractions.

5. How did this travail of the earth express itself? The mountains melted like wax in the face of G'd's Presence; not only in the face of G'd's Presence, but even BEFORE that, in the presence of the Master of the universe, i.e. the *Shechinah*, the Divine entourage. The fact that the Psalmist does not say *mipney*, on account of, but rather *lifney*, in front of, indicates that these bolts of lightning would be spreading outwards, expanding their brilliance.

6. Should you ask why would G'd trouble Himself to work such terrifying miracles for the undeserving, i.e. the earth, and yet all the people will SURVIVE it, (having been granted a special fortitude to

ג עָנָן וַעֲרָפֶל סְבִיבָיו צֶדֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט מְכוֹן כִּסְאוֹ׃
ד אֵשׁ לְפָנָיו תֵּלֵךְ וּתְלַהֵט סָבִיב צָרָיו׃
ה הֵאִירוּ בְרָקָיו תֵּבֵל רָאֲתָה וַתָּחֶל הָאָרֶץ׃
ו הָרִים כַּדּוֹנַג נָמַסּוּ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה מִלִּפְנֵי אֲדוֹן כָּל-
הָאָרֶץ׃
ז הִגִּידוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם צִדְקוֹ וְרָאוּ כָל-הָעַמִּים כְּבוֹדוֹ׃
ח יֵבֹשׁוּ כָּל-עֹבְדֵי פֶסֶל הַמִּתְהַלְלִים בָּאֱלִילִים הִשְׁתַּחֲווּ-
לוֹ כָּל-אֱלֹהִים׃
ט שָׁמְעָה וַתִּשְׂמַח צִיּוֹן וַתָּגֵלְנָה בְּנוֹת יְהוּדָה לְמַעַן
מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ יְהוָה׃

enable them to do so) the answer is that G'd wants not only the Heavens to tell of His righteousness, but He wants all the nations to see His glory. He wants the nations to see that the Jewish people can survive what the earth itself is unable to survive, i.e. the mountains are melting. It is this that Rabbi Yehudah has stated in the Mechiltah (Yitro, Exodus 20,15). Israel was enveloped by Heavenly flames, and G'd ordered the Heavens to drip dew on Israel. In this fashion, the Heavens told of the righteousness of G'd. As to the nations who witnessed from a distance, outside the range of the fire's heat, they were allowed to witness the spectacle only in order to be impressed with G'd's glory.

7. *Pessel* is the name of a likeness in stone or wood of an *elil*, a deity which the pagan worships. Reproduction of the sun or the moon, would be called *pessel*, whereas the sun or moon itself in such case would be described as *elil*. The same applies to people who make images of what they perceive angels to look like, and who pray to such angels. This is the meaning of *kol elohay ha-amim elilim*, all the deities of the nations are *elilim*.

The Psalmist calls on G'd to shame these people, who though not believing in the *pessel* itself, worship before it, since it symbolizes a great power (in their eyes). Moses is saying that only when not only those who believe in the actual images are shamed, but when also those who profess to employ the *pessel* only as a symbol of celestial powers are shamed, will it become clear that their *mazzal*, their deity has failed them, and their erstwhile faith will crumble.

8. Israel, i.e. Zion and the daughters of Yehudah, compares

9For You, LORD, are supreme over all the earth; You are exalted high above all divine beings.
10O you who love the LORD, hate evil!
He guards the lives of His loyal ones, saving them from the hand of the wicked.

favorably to the gentiles. Whereas the gentiles are not impressed by what they hear or see until they witness their own deities acknowledge G'd, Zion and the daughters of Yehudah rejoice already when they HEAR that G'd will teach the gentiles His justice tempered with mercy, i.e. *lema-an mishpatecha Hashem.*

9. Let no one say that Israel's joy is of vindictive nature, that whereas when G'd withdrew at the time the temple was destroyed and His Providence was entrusted to His agents, Israel had been burned by the fires raging at that time and the gentiles had danced around gleefully.

We must not think that now that the tables have been turned and the Presence of G'd returns, and Israel has been vindicated, their joy is due to the reinstatement of G'd. Even when the *Shechinah* had not yet manifested itself on earth, G'd remained so exalted above the earth, *elyon al kol ha-aretz* and all other deities, that this very knowledge is what caused Israel to rejoice already in anticipation of the final redemption when G'd no longer delegates His authority. Israel's joy is pure and altruistic, due only to the fact that G'd becomes universally recognized in all His Majesty. They had realized that the success of the gentiles during the period Israel had been in exile, was not due to forces that operate independently of G'd, for had this been so, why would those forces NOW humble themselves before G'd?

10. Having said that the success of the wicked is due to G'd's Providence, even while His Presence on earth has been withdrawn, a person may say how is it possible that the righteous does not even enjoy the *peyrot*, dividends of his good deeds in this world?

The Psalmist answers that G'd is concerned with NOT denying the wicked their freedom of choice. In this verse, he addresses himself to the trouble free life experienced by the wicked. The lack of "comfort" or "good" experienced by the *tzaddik* all too often is addressed in the next verse.

First the Psalmist says "Lovers of G'd, hate those who are wicked!", do not be afraid that because they appear successful your hatred would backfire and that you would become their victims, and that there is nothing that stands in the way of the wicked accomplishing what they have set out to do. Remember *shomer*

ט כִּי-אַתָּה יְהוָה עֶלְיוֹן עַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ מְאֹד נַעֲלֵיתָ עַל
-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים:
י אֹהֲבֵי יְהוָה שִׂנְאוּ רָע שֹׁמֵר נַפְשׁוֹת חֲסִידָיו מִיַּד
רְשָׁעִים יַצִּילֵם:
יא אוֹר זָרֻעַ לַצַּדִּיק וּלְיִשְׁרֵי-לֵב שִׂמְחָה:

nafshot chassidav, He watches over the souls of His pious ones. He who preserves His pious ones from sinning, i.e. protects *nafshot* their souls, and does not allow them to fall victim to Satan, protects them also against becoming the cause of disaster. This same G'd will most certainly save His *chassidim*, pious ones from the hands of the wicked, so that the latter will not kill them. The reason the Psalmist says "from the hands of the wicked" instead of simply "from the wicked", is in accordance with our commentary on Proverbs, that G'd allows the wicked the latitude inherent in having granted all men free choice. The wicked may make all the preparations to carry out his evil design, until his net seems certain to ensnare the righteous. After that G'd provides a way for the righteous NOT to fall into the net spread our for him by the sinner. This is the meaning of (Proverbs 3,25) "and from the destruction by the wicked He saves them"; i.e. even when you seem to be in "their hand" already. *Ki Hashem yihyeh bechislecha, veshamar raglecha milached*, for the Lord will be your confidence and He will guard your foot against the trap.

11. The previous verse had explained that the righteous need not be scared when he observes the success of the wicked, even if this righteous person at that time does not even receive the dividends of his righteousness in this world. Now the Psalmist refers to the ultimate reward of the *tzaddik* in a manner similar to our commentary on Proverbs 8,21. "To ensure that those who love me will inherit something of substance". The Psalmist says not to pay heed to the lack of comforts that many righteous experience in this world. These dividends have not been withheld due to G'd's inability to make good on His promises. G'd has withheld them at this time, in order *ve-otroteyehm ammaleh*, to make full their treasure chambers. (Proverbs 8,21) The share of these people in the bliss to be experienced in the hereafter is being increased by G'd through His withholding the dividends of those *tzaddikim* in this life. G'd will grant their entire reward in the form of spiritual currency. G'd views these *peyrot*, dividends in this world like *or*, light, brightness, and just as a few fruit planted in the soil will ultimately produce many times their

[11]Light is sown for the righteous, radiance for the upright.
[12]O you righteous, rejoice in the LORD and acclaim His holy name!

98 *A psalm.*
Sing to the LORD a new song, for He has worked wonders; His right hand, His holy arm, has won Him victory.
[2]The LORD has manifested His victory, has displayed His triumph in the sight of the nations.
[3]He was mindful of His steadfast love and faithfulness toward the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth beheld the victory of our God.

number, i.e. the investment will multiply manifold, so the dividends which G'd has planted in the "ground" on behalf of the *tzaddik* will also multiply in the hereafter. The same applies in even greater measure to the *yishrey lev*, those who have the fortitude to suffer their *yissurim*, deprivations, afflictions in this life joyfully.

This very joy they felt in their confidence that their sufferings must have positive meaning, adds further to the ultimate reward in store for them.

12. Should you ask what comfort is being offered to the *tzaddik* in this world, – the answer is *ba hashem*. He will be with G'd. Just as G'd does NOT rejoice while His *Shechinah* is in self imposed exile, so His righteous creatures cannot expect joy until He too will again experience joy. Give thanks, i.e. *hodu*, that G'd has seen fit *lezecher kodsho*, to make your fate a reflection, memorial of His own experience during these years of exile.

Psalm 98

1. We have explained previously that even though his name is not mentioned in them, the 10 Psalms from 91 to 100 were also composed by Moses. All the ones which do not contain his name deal with the redemption at the time of the Messiah. The "new" song is the one that will be sung at that time, celebrating both the re-emergence of G'd's Presence, *Shechinah* on earth from its self imposed exile, as well as the salvations the Jewish people will have experienced at that time.

At this point, Moses asks why wait and acknowledge G'd's salvation only in the future, when in fact the subject matter of that song is already applicable now, seeing that G'd has performed

יג שִׂמְחוּ צַדִּיקִים בַּיהוָה וְהוֹדוּ לְזֵכֶר קָדְשׁוֹ׃

צה א מִזְמוֹר שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חָדָשׁ כִּי-נִפְלָאוֹת עָשָׂה
הוֹשִׁיעָה-לּוֹ יְמִינוֹ וּזְרוֹעַ קָדְשׁוֹ׃
ב הוֹדִיעַ יְהוָה יְשׁוּעָתוֹ לְעֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם גִּלָּה צִדְקָתוֹ׃
ג זָכַר חַסְדּוֹ וֶאֱמוּנָתוֹ לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל רָאוּ כָל-אַפְסֵי-
אָרֶץ אֵת יְשׁוּעַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ׃

nifla-ot, wonderful miracles in Egypt, both "with His right, i.e. *yemino*, i.e. the meting out of justice, as well as with His left hand, i.e. the attribute of mercy.

His right hand, – as referred to in ***shirat hayam***, (Exodus 15,6) when His *Shechinah* emerged from its exile then and "smashed the enemy", and His left, i.e. His holy arm, which ***nehalta be-ozcha*** (ibid 15,13) You led Israel to Your holy residence". Since You have done so at that time, You are surely able to do so again NOW!

2. Since You had accelerated Your timetable for the Exodus from Egypt by cutting off 190 from the 400 years decreed, You could easily do so again, in fact ***hayom im bekolo tish-ma-u*** even this very day if Israel listens to Your voice! (Psalms 95,7) Although *Hodia hashem yeshuato*, G'd gave advance notice of the timing of His salvation, He decided nevertheless to advance the timing of His salvation! By doing so, ***gilah tzidkato***, He revealed His charity! He had withstood the argument of the ***sar shel mitzrayim*** the advocate of Egypt at the celestial Court, that G'd had discriminated against the Egyptians! It would be useful therefore to begin singing this "new song" already now!

3. Should you ask, that if G'd's power was so great, why did He have to instruct the Israelites to BORROW silver and golden trinkets from their Egyptian neighbors, i.e. acquire them by stealth? (Exodus 11,2) Why did Israel have to be viewed in retrospect as if they had plundered Egypt, (Exodus 12,35) why did G'd not simply force the Egyptians to hand over their trinkets? The answer is that if G'd had done so the Egyptians would never have summoned up enough courage to pursue the Israelites. The splitting of the sea would then not have occurred, and the name of the Lord would not have been aggrandized and sanctified as it had been as a result of that event.

As it was, the Egyptians said to themselves that the very fact

4Raise a shout to the LORD, all the earth, break into joyous songs of praise!
5Sing praise to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and melodious song.
6With trumpets and the blast of the horn raise a shout before the LORD, the king.
7Let the sea and all within it thunder, the world and its inhabitants;

that the Jews had had to use subterfuge was proof that they did not have the right to force them to hand over these valuable objects. They felt capable of vanquishing Israel as long as they would meet them on equal terms, i.e. without Divine interference on behalf of Israel. They used this "loaning" by Israel of these trinkets as proof that Israel's progress henceforth would be on the basis of natural law, i.e. not accompanied by constant miracles. This is why they entered the sea, and G'd's name was exalted by what happened to them.

Israel too is given credit for having kept this plan of G'd secret for over 12 months. (since Exodus 3,22. i.e. before the 1st of the 10 plagues). Had Israel leaked this information, the destruction of Egypt's might in the sea would have been aborted. Because *zachar emunato*, Israel kept its faith, – after G'd remembered His kindness to Abraham – *chassdo*, even *affsey eretz* the end of the earth witnessed the salvation by the Lord our G'd. (compare Genesis 15,14, that Abraham's descendants would leave the land of their enslavement with great riches)

4. Having told Israel that they should sing the new song extolling G'd's salvations already now, Moses now faces the gentile nations which include the 4 kingdoms which will host Israel during its various exiles, and tells them to give noisy recognition to G'd lest their fate become the same as that of the Egyptians who had abused Israel. Even though those nations may believe that they are executing G'd's will in exiling the Jewish people and keeping them from returning to their homeland, G'd has never authorized them to maltreat and abuse the Jews.

Should the nations find it difficult to humble themselves before G'd totally, seeing that fate seems to smile at them, at least, – says Moses – *pitzchu*, burst into song etc. acknowledge G'd who has given you the opportunity to host His people and to treat them in a manner He wants, not to enslave them!

5. Once you have started to sing, be sure to sing ONLY to Hashem, not to your deities. Your song must commence softly, not

ד הָרִיעוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ פִּצְחוּ וְרַנְּנוּ וְזַמֵּרוּ׃
ה זַמְּרוּ לַיהוָה בְּכִנּוֹר בְּכִנּוֹר וְקוֹל זִמְרָה׃
ו בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת וְקוֹל שׁוֹפָר הָרִיעוּ לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה׃
ז יִרְעַם הַיָּם וּמְלֹאוֹ תֵּבֵל וְיֹשְׁבֵי בָהּ׃

loudly with instruments producing a high volume of sound, but *bechinor*, with the stringed instrument, the harp, a soft voiced instrument. You must not boast that G'd has given His people under your control. Gradually, you may increase the volume of sound you produce when singing to the Lord, accompanied by the harp's music.

6. By the merit you nations acquire in humbling yourselves despite the fact that G'd has placed His people under your control, and by the fact that your joy has been tempered by awe, and by trembling before the Lord, you will eventually be able to proclaim His praises with trumpets, i.e. at the top of your voices, since you are doing this before the king, the Lord.

G'd will manifest Himself in two ways. Since He comes in order to judge, *ba lishpot*, He will manifest Himself as king; hence He has to be hailed *hari-u*, by the *teruat melech* (compare Numbers 23,21), has to be given an accolade fit for Royalty.

In the temple, the trumpets used to sound short blasts whereas the *shofar*, ram's horn was used to blow the longer notes. Both are employed when hailing a king. The reason only the sound of the *shofar*, *kol shofar* is mentioned here and not the *shofar* itself, is, because the sound of the *shofar* will be heard long after the sound of the trumpet has ceased.

This very blowing of the *shofar*, ram's horn, helps temper G'd's justice with mercy, i.e. *hamelech hashem*, though He acts as king, as judge, He does so by also employing His attribute *Hashem*. If you nations will relate to Him in this fashion, He will not have to relate to you with the fury of His anger.

7. There is no doubt that our Lord is king also while we are in exile, since He has caused all these convulsions in the sea and amongst all the people that inhabit the globe at the time of *kriat yam suf*, when He split the sea.

8. In the event of you nations acting in accordance with my suggestion, the "rivers", i.e. the 4 kingdoms who have exiled Israel and who have reason to fear G'd's arrival when He comes to judge them, will clap their hands in joy together with the mountains, i.e. their respective princes and leaders, and they will jubilate.

8let the rivers clap their hands, the mountains sing joyously together
9at the presence of the LORD, for He is coming to rule the earth; He will rule the world justly, and its peoples with equity.

99 *The LORD, enthroned on cherubim, is king, peoples tremble, the earth quakes.*
2The LORD is great in Zion, and exalted above all peoples.
3They praise Your name as great and awesome; He is holy!

9. Since *lifney Hashem*, they find themselves before *Hashem*, i.e. the merciful G'd, who has come to judge the earth, He will judge the earth bearing in mind *tzedek*, righteousness, charity, and He will judge the nations *bemeysharim*, on the basis of *yashar*, that what is right must also appear to be right, i.e. applying a yardstick commonly known as more elastic, making allowances for human frailties, i.e. *lifnim mishurat hadin*.

Psalm 99

1. In the previous psalms, Moses, author of this group of 11 psalms has repeatedly referred to *Hashem malach*, the time when G'd i.e. His 4 lettered name, would rule. He referred to the time when G'd's Presence would again reside between the cherubs on the lid of the holy ark, in the temple to be rebuilt. In those instances, Moses had seemed to address the nations of the world.

The nations *yirgezu*, are trembling, i.e. they fail to understand how the Eternal, the Creator, can be conceived of as establishing His rule only IN THE FUTURE. To their minds, the fact that G'd is not subject to change or development, automatically means that His kingdom cannot be something in the future only. They believe that His kingdom has remained constant since time immemorial. As Creator, why would he need to await a time when he could BECOME king?! What bothers the nations even more is how the G'd whom the entire universe cannot contain, i.e. (Kings I, 8,27) "the skies and the celestial regions cannot contain Him", can dwell in the minuscule space separating the two cherubs on the lid of the holy ark? This causes the nations even greater *rogez*, mental disturbance. The very earth

ח נְהָרוֹת יִמְחֲאוּ-כָף יַחַד הָרִים יְרַנֵּנוּ:
ט לִפְנֵי-יְהוָה כִּי-בָא לִשְׁפֹּט הָאָרֶץ יִשְׁפֹּט תֵּבֵל בְּצֶדֶק
וְעַמִּים בְּמֵישָׁרִים:

צט א יְהוָה מָלָךְ יִרְגְּזוּ עַמִּים יֹשֵׁב כְּרוּבִים תָּנוּט הָאָרֶץ:
ב יְהוָה בְּצִיּוֹן גָּדוֹל וְרָם הוּא עַל-כָּל-הָעַמִּים:
ג יוֹדוּ שִׁמְךָ גָּדוֹל וְנוֹרָא קָדוֹשׁ הוּא:

would give way, *tonut ha-aretz* in light of such incomprehensible phenomena!

2. However, the nations fail to understand that *Hashem betzion gadol*, G'd is great in Zion. When the questioners among the nations understood the Presence of G'd on earth refer to "earth" in the purely material sense, they assumed that the very fact that earth is "earthy", material, would make it impossible for abstract, spiritual G'd to reside thereon.

Their argument would have been true if it were applied to other spiritual beings such as angels. The angels cannot come to earth without assuming earthly garb, appearances. We know this from all the encounters reported between human beings and angels. However, this is true ONLY of those spiritual beings who have not themselves created the material world. Because such angel is NOT the creator of earth, earth in turn is not subservient to him, need not accommodate itself to such angels. Such restrictions do not apply however, to G'd the Creator of earth.

After all, *veyabeshet yadav yatzaru*, (Psalms 95,5) "His hands have fashioned the dry land mass". G'd's Presence on earth therefore is in His original, unadorned, undiluted spiritual essence. G'd REMAINS in His greatness even *betzion*, i.e. on earth, does not need to adapt to the limitations inherent in space and matter. As far as the nations are concerned, *al kol ha-amim*, He is *ram*, high above. In other words, the gentiles are unable to conceive of Him as on earth, rather they conceive of Him as "high", i.e. in the celestial regions.

3. By paying homage to Your great and awesome name as being ONLY "holy", they effectively eliminate You as an active participant in the affairs of the material world. How can G'd be awe inspiring, *nora*, if his Presence is not seen or felt on earth? Consigning Him to

4Mighty king who loves justice, it was You who established equity, You who worked righteous judgment in Jacob.
5Exalt the LORD our God and bow down to His footstool; He is holy!
6Moses and Aaron among His priests, Samuel, among those who call on His name— when they called to the LORD, He answered them.

Heaven diminishes His stature and His impact on mankind! Declaring G'd merely as "holy", is doing a disservice!

4. Having answered one of the 2 arguments of the nations, namely how it is possible for a minute area on earth to contain the Lord, who cannot be contained by the entire universe, the Psalmist now addresses himself to the second argument of the nations, the *malach*, i.e. the reference to G'd's kingship as belonging to a certain time frame. The nations, allowing for the unchanging nature of G'd, questioned how a specific time frame can be assigned to G'd's rule? Surely, they argue, He ruled, He rules and He will rule forever more!

The Psalmist answers that concerning certain aspects of G'd's kingship the argument of the nations is correct. The term *melech*, or *malach*, is usually used only to depict the dispensation of strict justice, i.e. *melech mishpat ohev*, the king loves to mete out justice. In the future, there will indeed be no need to temper justice with mercy. The Psalmist says *ki ba lishpot ha-aretz* at THAT time G'd, i.e. as king, will indeed come to judge the earth!

In the meantime, however, *konnanta meysharim*, You have established a synthesis of justice and mercy, i.e. *mishpat u-tzedakah assita*, you have done justice mixed with charity.

As long as Israel is imperfect, i.e. Ya-akov, G'd cannot afford to manifest Himself as *melech* only, but *mishpat u-tzedakah be-akov attah assita*. Hence, at this time it would be premature to refer to G'd as being king on a permanent basis.

5. After addressing himself to the nations and their crafty scheme to hail G'd merely as "holy", as *ram al kol ha-amim*, high above all the nations, the Psalmist speaks to the Jewish people who do believe that G'd does not allow the fact that earth is material to prevent Him from exercising His close supervision of history. (from allowing His Presence to dwell in the temple)

He tells Israel not to construe G'd's withdrawal from the celestial regions to earth as abandonment by G'd of Heaven, nor to think that the rules of conduct on earth would be changed so that they no

ד וְעֹז מֶלֶךְ מִשְׁפָּט אָהֵב אַתָּה כוֹנַנְתָּ מֵישָׁרִים מִשְׁפָּט
וּצְדָקָה בְּיַעֲקֹב אַתָּה עָשִׂיתָ:
ה רוֹמְמוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לַהֲדֹם רַגְלָיו קָדוֹשׁ
הוּא:
ו מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּכֹהֲנָיו וּשְׁמוּאֵל בְּקֹרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ קֹרְאִים
אֶל-יְהוָה וְהוּא יַעֲנֵם:

longer correspond to the rules of conduct applicable in Heaven. *Rommemu*, i.e. Exalt the Lord our G'd!, i.e. acknowledge that G'd is high, reigns above the Heavens WITHOUT abandoning earth. Prostrate yourselves at His footstool, i.e. in the temple which is called "His footstool". (Isaiah 66,1) Holiness, spirituality, can be found on earth just as it is ever present in the Heavens.

6. One can still argue that even if G'd is found in Heaven and on earth simultaneously, His Presence on earth is confined to the temple, i.e. "His footstool", in the place known as "gateway to Heaven", opposite the celestial sanctuary. But this does not prove that His Presence extends also to other places on earth. To counter this argument, the Psalmist declares that various human beings have called upon G'd at different spots on earth, and have been answered promptly. Not only did G'd answer Moses and Aaron when they prayed to Him amidst the tribes, but even when alone, Samuel was answered by G'd immediately, without having had recourse to an intermediary!

7. Should you argue that in the case of Moses and Samuel who had prayed to G'd in the presence of many witnesses, it is true that G'd had answered promptly (Samuel I, 12,17) and (Numbers 9,8) but how do we know that the same was true of Aaron's prayer? The Psalmist therefore does not refer to Aaron separately, but links him with Moses. G'd spoke to Moses Aaron and Miriam immediately after the latter two had spoken about Moses. (Numbers 12,4) Had G'd's Presence been confined to Heaven, how could He have replied to Aaron and Miriam so promptly? This is proof that He is constantly aware of and concerned with what goes on in our planet.

These instances did not occur in Jerusalem, only *be-amud anan* G'd communicated screened by a cloud. Should you ask why G'd does not respond in like manner to everybody, the answer is *shamru edotav*, these people were careful, in observing His commandments, those that testify to His Presence, and *vechok natan lahem* the particular statute given to them.

[7]He spoke to them in a pillar of cloud; they obeyed His decrees, the law He gave them.
[8]O LORD our God, You answered them; You were a forgiving God for them, but You exacted retribution for their misdeeds.
[9]Exalt the LORD our God, and bow toward His holy hill, for the LORD our God is holy.

No Jew is born who is not equipped with the potential to observe G'd's statutes in accordance with the talents granted him at birth. He who attains his purpose in his first life on earth, need not be reborn, his soul will await redemption in the hereafter in serenity, in the world of spirits.

He who fails to attain his G'd given objective, will have to undergo transmigration of souls until he does achieve his objective. The Psalmist says that these people to whose prayer G'd responded so promptly, are the ones who had attained the degree of human perfection that it was possible for them to attain. Even so, they could not SEE G'd, but needed to be addressed via *amud anan*, a pillar of cloud. Only man, even perfect man needs the shield of a cloud when addressed by G'd. G'd Himself relates to what goes on on earth without screen. This is a *chok*, i.e. a limitation G'd has imposed on His universe.

8. Should one reason that since He is not seen, the answers that Moses etc. received may have come from an angel and not from G'd Himself, and that He remains in solitary splendour in the Heavens, Moses replies "You our G'd have answered them". The proof is that *el nosse hayita lahem*, You have been a forgiving G'd to them. We have been told that angels are not empowered to forgive sins. (Exodus 23,21) It is clear therefore that You Yourself have answered them. Furthermore, an answer to Moses' prayer for instance, also included retribution to sinners, as in the case of Korach for instance. Moses had prayed for G'd to demonstrate by the unusual nature of the death of Korach and his companions, that he had not imposed his authority on the Jewish people etc. arbitrarily. (Numbers 16, 29–32) When Moses' prayer was promptly answered, this was clear proof that G'd Himself had answered, since no one else can manipulate the laws of nature in such fashion. This is what is meant by the words *venokem al alilotam*, He exacts revenge for their deeds. This incident too took place far from the temple site in Jerusalem.

9. There is ample justification then for exalting G'd not only in the Heavens and prostrating oneself before Him not only in the temple

ז בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן יְדַבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם שָׁמְרוּ עֵדֹתָיו וְחֹק נָתַן-
לָמוֹ:
ח יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אַתָּה עֲנִיתָם אֵל נֹשֵׂא הָיִיתָ לָהֶם וְנֹקֵם
עַל-עֲלִילוֹתָם:
ט רוֹמְמוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְהַר קָדְשׁוֹ כִּי-קָדוֹשׁ
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

which is called "His footstool", but ***lehar kodsho***, any place because He is holy. He will not fail to manifest Himself even on mountains which are NOT temple mounts.

Concerning the description of Samuel as ***kor-ey shemo***, those who call on His name, and the fact that though Moses and Aaron surely were also ***kor-ey shemo*** the Psalmist seems to differentiate between them, what is the reason for this?

The Talmud (Baba Metzia 85) relates that the prophet Elijah explained that if the 3 patriarchs had prayed in unison, they would not have needed to formulate a request, but their exalting G'd would have sufficed for Him to grant their unspoken request.

Also Rabbi Chiyah and his 2 sons were supposedly on such a high level. When Rabbi Chiyah officiated as leader in the prayers of the community on a public fast (presumably called to entreat G'd for rainfall), as soon as he uttered the words "who makes the wind blow and the rain fall", the wind blew and rain descended. When he was about to say "He who resurrects the dead", a storm blew up. They had said in heaven "who has revealed the secrets in the world"? They accused Elijah the prophet of having given away the secret of the resurrection of the dead. They punished Elijah, who descended to earth and appeared to Rabbi Chiyah like a fiery bear. This confused Rabbi Chiyah and he did not get to say the words "who resurrects the dead".

What the Psalmist is saying is, that if Moses or Aaron would be joined by the 2 priests Eleazar and Ittamar in their prayers, making a threesome, merely calling on the name of G'd i.e. ***kor-ey Hashem***, would suffice to elicit an immediate response from G'd. The same would be true if Samuel would find 2 men of equal calibre to join their prayers to his.

Generations blessed with people of such stature, do not even need to beseech G'd in order for their prayers to be granted. (prayers on behalf of others.)

100 *A psalm for praise.*
Raise a shout for the LORD, all the earth;
2worship the LORD in gladness; come into His presence with shouts of joy.
3Acknowledge that the LORD is God; He made us and we are His, His people, the flock He tends.
4Enter His gates with praise, His courts with acclamation.
Praise Him!
Bless His name!

Psalm 100

1. A hymn of thanksgiving. A *todah* is a thanksgiving offering which results from the joy experienced when one is the recipient of favours from G'd. It is an offering that is brought gladly, the donor feeling happy that his sacrifice is not due to the need to seek atonement for a sin; he is confident that his offering is pleasing in the eyes of the Lord "He who slaughters a thanksgiving offering, truly honours Me" (Psalms 50,23)

Since excess joy is apt to result in sin, even inadvertent sin, the author composed this hymn to teach how gratitude is to be expressed, i.e. in humility, without excessive exuberant behaviour. Therefore he says "make sounds of alarm to G'd – all the earth", i.e. even the righteous, for there is no man that is without sin. (compare Numbers 10,19, the word *hari-u* is also from the root *ra*, evil, sin). It is proper to be mindful of this, so that one's joy will be tempered by that knowledge.

2. If, however, you always serve G'd in joy, you need NOT humble yourselves, but can approach Him *birnanah*, in exultation. Let your joy in serving Him be like the joy of *motzey shallal rav* him who finds great spoils. (Psalms 119,162) Once you become used to making G'd the outlet for your joy, you need not fear that joy will lead you to debase yourself. Once you serve the Lord from feelings of joy, you can appear before Him, i.e. in the temple, with jubilation.

Proof that this characteristic of serving G'd from feelings of joy is so important, is found in Deut. 28,47, where the Torah castigates Israel for NOT having served the Lord from feelings of joy.

3. Should Israel query how it is possible to serve the Lord always joyfully, seeing that we are subject to many painful *yissurim*, afflictions, seeing that G'd's attribute of justice is ever present in our lives, the Psalmist replies "pay attention to my words and your concern over afflictions will disappear. Reflect on the fact that the

ק א מִזְמוֹר לְתוֹדָה הָרִיעוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ:
ב עִבְדוּ אֶת-יְהוָה בְּשִׂמְחָה בֹּאוּ לְפָנָיו בִּרְנָנָה:
ג דְּעוּ כִּי-יְהוָה הוּא אֱלֹהִים הוּא עָשָׂנוּ וְלֹא אֲנַחְנוּ עַמּוֹ
וְצֹאן מַרְעִיתוֹ:
ד בֹּאוּ שְׁעָרָיו בְּתוֹדָה חֲצֵרֹתָיו בִּתְהִלָּה הוֹדוּ לוֹ בָּרְכוּ
שְׁמוֹ:

very presence of the attribute of justice is an act of kindness by G'd, is for your benefit". It is not the *yissurim*, afflictions that lead you astray, rather the boundless wealth granted by G'd may lead you to lead a life of debauchery and licentiousness.

Should you question G'd's justice, believing yourself to be righteous, as did Job, remind yourself that "He has made us", i.e. no one else is as knowledgeable about my defects as my Maker, and no one knows as well how such defects can be remedied. If this does not satisfy us, we must remember *velo anachnu*, we are His property, i.e. we do not belong exclusively to ourselves, but to Him. It follows that the pain experienced by us, is also experienced by G'd, since a master suffers when his slave, i.e. his property is hurt. In fact the master hurts more, since the slave has no property he can lose.

From the physical point of view, we are *tzon mar-ito*, the sheep of His pasture, i.e He provides sustenance for us, not indirectly through agents, such as He provides for the gentile nations. Just as the sheep do not need to worry about the availability of pasture, but their shepherd worries about such matters, so G'd worries about Israel's sustenance. He will select what is suitable for us, not we ourselves. For all these reasons, we have no excuse not to serve him joyfully.

4. Having been thus prepared for how to behave when we enter Jerusalem, i.e. the gates of Zion, the author tells us that we must not feel that G'd owes US thanks for our having troubled ourselves to come to the temple to offer thanksgiving sacrifices, but rather WE must feel grateful, *bo-u betodah*, for being privileged to enter His courtyards, and we must add praise in addition to our thanksgiving. It is a compliment for us that G'd wants us to bless His name, considering our insignificance. Therefore, we are to express gratitude for that privilege.

5. At this point the Psalmist describes the manner in which we express our thanks for G'd's kindness. We know that if a miracle

5For the LORD is good; His steadfast love is eternal; His faithfulness is for all generations.

101 *Of David. A psalm.*
I will sing of faithfulness and justice; I will chant a hymn to You, O LORD.
2I will study the way of the blameless; when shall I attain it?
I will live without blame within my house.

occurred to save a person from immediate danger, he has to pronounce a benediction in which he acknowledges that G'd has watched over him despite his unworthiness, i.e. that he did not deserve that G'd should interfere with the laws of nature on his account.

When an individual has experienced such miraculous escape from danger, such an individual's son and grandson have to acknowledge such miracle when they find themselves at the site where such miracle occurred. The son or grandson has to recite "blessed be the Lord who has performed a miracle for so and so at this site".

The Psalmist underlines that the recipient of the favour acknowledges that the *chessed*, kindness of G'd was at work when He performed such miracle. We do not consider ourselves as having been entitled to miracles based on our conduct. *Ki Tov Hashem. – le-olam chassdo.* Even a righteous person engaged in performance of a *mitzvah*, meritorious deed, must realize that such a miracle was an act of *chessed*, loving kindness on the part of G'd.

Rabbi Akivah explained the verse (Proverbs 11,4) in connection with an incidence recorded in the Talmud Shabbat 156. His daughter had been told by an astrologer that when she would get married, a snake would kill her. She was worried about this, naturally. On the day of her wedding, she stuck a pin in a hole in the wall, and this pin pierced the eye of the snake which was holed up inside that wall. On the day following the wedding, when she went to retreive the pin, the snake came out with the pin.

Her father asked her what good deed she had performed to have merited such a miraculous escape. She told him that some evening during supper, a poor man had knocked at the door, and no one had heard it or opened the door. She had gone and given the man her own supper. Rabbi Akivah told her that she had been saved on account of this meritorious deed. He based this on the verse in Proverbs (11,4) "charity saves from death". Not only from unnatural

ה כִּי-טוֹב יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ וְעַד-דֹּר וָדֹר אֱמוּנָתוֹ׃

קא א לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר חֶסֶד-וּמִשְׁפָּט אָשִׁירָה לְךָ יְהוָה אֲזַמֵּרָה׃
ב אַשְׂכִּילָה בְּדֶרֶךְ תָּמִים מָתַי תָּבוֹא אֵלָי אֶתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתָם
-לְבָבִי בְּקֶרֶב בֵּיתִי׃

death, i.e. violent death, but from the incidence of death itself. This means that charity does not only protect a person from a cruel death, but that it may lengthen such a person's life span, – as in this instance. (compare also Talmud Baba Batra, first chapter.) (Tana de bey Eliyahu 7,1)

All this is an act of kindness by G'd. Having read the story about Rabbi Akivah's daughter, one might have thought that she was ENTITLED to such special protection. The Psalmist therefore stresses the *chessed* kindness element in all such situations. Whereas perhaps the performance of the *mitzvah* ENTITLED the daughter to be spared a particularly nasty death, G'd went beyond all that, and granted her additional years of life. The reference *ad dor vador* relates to the third generation, which is still viewed as the beneficiary of what happened to the grandfather, and therefore has to acknowledge the miracle that happened to his grandfather gratefully.

Psalm 101

1. The Kabbalists say that the difference between a Psalm which commences with the words *ledavid mizmor* and the ones which commences with the words *mizmor ledavid*, is, that in the former case David had to make preparations in order to receive inspiration to compose the hymn. When it says *mizmor ledavid*, his inspiration came spontaneously, i.e. he had been granted *ruach hakodesh*, holy spirit.

David performed deeds of loving kindness, i.e. *chessed* as well as justice. This in turn, he hoped would help him *ashirah*, so that I can sing, and beyond that even so that I can compose a hymn, i.e. *a-zamrah*. Since it is possible that his deeds of loving kindness and justice would be interpreted as directed primarily for the benefit of his people, David adds *Lecha Hashem*, my purpose is only for You O Lord, I desire to compose a hymn.

2. I endeavour to perceive with my mental eye in sincere fashion, i.e. *bederech tamim*, which path to choose, so that You will come to

3I will not set before my eyes anything base; I hate crooked dealing; I will have none of it.
4Perverse thoughts will be far from me; I will know nothing of evil.
5He who slanders his friend in secret I will destroy; I cannot endure the haughty and proud man.
6My eyes are on the trusty men of the land, to have them at my side.
He who follows the way of the blameless shall be in my service.
7He who deals deceitfully shall not live in my house; he who speaks untruth shall not stand before my eyes.
8Each morning I will destroy all the wicked of the land, to rid the city of the LORD of all evildoers.

me O G'd without my having to make special preparations in order to receive Divine inspiration.

I have found that the only way to assure myself of Your inspiration on a regular basis, is to pursue a path of simple integrity. I must free myself from all ulterior motives, even when people oppress me or when I suffer afflictions. I must train myself to be *tamim*, sincere with both my urges i.e. *levavi*, my "dual" heart. This is in line with the statement in the Talmud that a person must appear to be so altruistic, as if he did not exist at all. (Talmud) Not only must he not mislead outsiders, i.e. in his contact with others, but even more so he must not mislead the members of his household. Even in the privacy of his home, David says, one must not have any egotistical aspirations.

This is the essence of the *midah*, character trait of *anavah*, humility, hence I have to practice it *bekerev beyti* within the confines of my house. When I am sincere, upright, I can expect to be granted *ruach hakodesh* holy insights, Divine inspiration.

3. Since the two major seducers of man are his eye and his heart, the eye because it perceives objects to be coveted, and the heart because it covets those objects, I will not allow my eyes to behold unworthy objects, so that my heart cannot lust after them. The heart can only lust after what the eye has already seen. My other limbs cannot become agents for my eyes and heart, if I do not see something tempting.

Meanwhile, I have discovered that even if *assoh seytim*, deviations have been committed, my heart hates this. Everything depends on

ג לֹא-אָשִׁית לְנֶגֶד עֵינַי דְּבַר-בְּלִיָּעַל עֲשֹׂה-סֵטִים
שָׂנֵאתִי לֹא יִדְבַּק בִּי:
ד לֵבָב עִקֵּשׁ יָסוּר מִמֶּנִּי רַע לֹא אֵדָע:
ה מְלָשְׁנִי בַסֵּתֶר רֵעֵהוּ אוֹתוֹ אַצְמִית גְּבַהּ-עֵינַיִם וּרְחַב
לֵבָב אֹתוֹ לֹא אוּכָל:
ו עֵינַי בְּנֶאֱמְנֵי-אֶרֶץ לָשֶׁבֶת עִמָּדִי הֹלֵךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ תָּמִים
הוּא יְשָׁרְתֵנִי:
ז לֹא-יֵשֵׁב בְּקֶרֶב בֵּיתִי עֹשֵׂה רְמִיָּה דֹּבֵר שְׁקָרִים לֹא-
יִכּוֹן לְנֶגֶד עֵינָי:
ח לַבְּקָרִים אַצְמִית כָּל-רִשְׁעֵי-אָרֶץ לְהַכְרִית מֵעִיר-
יְהוָה כָּל-פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן:

the heart, in the final analysis. If the heart is pure.. even evil seen by the eye, *lo yidbak bi*, will not attach itself to me.

4. If my request from G'd therefore is to remove a crooked heart, this is no solution, since I cannot then claim credit for my rectitude and uprightness. I would then have no knowledge of evil, i.e. I would not have to fight temptation. The reward for choosing to be good is contingent on the ABILITY to choose evil.

5. I have found therefore, that though I live with a heart which possesses both good and evil urges, I must not keep company with people of bad character. I must only mingle with people possessed of good character traits. Should I meet with slanderers, who inform privately, wanting me to kill those whom they describe as my enemies, I will destroy such slanderers. I will recognize that the accusation is frivolous. Such a person is wicked against his fellow man. Similarly, he who indulges his eyes and therefore makes his heart covet and desire is wicked vis a vis Heaven. I will shun such a person. This is the way in which I will try and keep from committing sins.

6. I will keep the company of those who are trustworthy, and have them dwell with me; my eyes will select those to wait upon me who are walking in the path of integrity.

7. Even if a deceitful person happens to cross my path, he shall not sit in my house, I will expel him. I will not allow liars in my presence.

8. I will strive to eradicate the wicked by destroying them on

102 *A prayer of the lowly man when he is faint and pours forth his plea before the LORD.*
2O LORD, hear my prayer; let my cry come before You.
3Do not hide Your face from me in my time of trouble; turn Your ear to me; when I cry, answer me speedily.
4For my days have vanished like smoke and my bones are charred like a hearth.
5My body is stricken and withered like grass; too wasted to eat my food;

successive mornings. The time the wicked practice their evil ways is when they leave their houses in the morning. When all the wicked people in one city have been gradually destroyed, the remainder of the townspeople will do repentance, due to fear of what might befall them.

Psalm 102

1. It is the unanimous opinion of all the commentators that this hymn reflects the exiled Jewish nation's feeling of being depressed, and we will follow the traditional approach. Although the proper way of reacting to *yissurim*, G'd's disciplinary measures, is to accept them as evidence of the hidden love of G'd, who uses them to evoke our repentance, there are occasions when the very severity of said afflictions causes one to give expression to one's troubles, so that additional pains would not break one's spirit.

Therefore, the suffering Jew who cleaves to G'd, unburdens himself by pouring out his anguish, i.e. *ya-atof* before G'd. This is not to be seen as a rejection of the fate imposed upon him by G'd, rather, just as a person who pours out a pail of water makes room for the pail to absorb more water, so by pouring out one's heart before G'd, the Jew remains fully aware that his afflictions will not be removed through his speaking out. It is the believing Jew's way of remaining capable to accept G'd's disciplining of him.

The prayer of the downtrodden is an expression of humility, and unlike the prayer mentioned by Solomon (Kings I, 8,30 et al) which rises heavenward, here the prayer is poured down to the right side of the worshipper like water, where it will be heard by G'd who is found standing on the right side of the destitute. This is what is meant by "and before the Lord he pours out his thoughts and anxiety".

2. Of the exiled, Jeremiah says in Lamentations 3,8: "though I cry

קב א תְּפִלָּה לְעָנִי כִּי-יַעֲטֹף וְלִפְנֵי יְהוָה יִשְׁפֹּךְ שִׂיחוֹ:
ב יְהוָה שִׁמְעָה תְפִלָּתִי וְשַׁוְעָתִי אֵילֶיךָ תָּבוֹא:
ג אַל-תַּסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי בְּיוֹם צַר-לִי הַטֵּה-אֵלַי אָזְנֶךָ
בְּיוֹם אֶקְרָא מַהֵר עֲנֵנִי:
ד כִּי-כָלוּ בְעָשָׁן יָמָי וְעַצְמוֹתַי כְּמוֹקֵד נִחָרוּ:
ה הוּכָּה כְעֵשֶׂב וַיִּבַשׁ לִבִּי כִּי שָׁכַחְתִּי מֵאֲכֹל לַחְמִי:

out and implore, He has shut out my prayer". The gates of prayer are locked. All the more so, if the supplicant is not only an exile, but poor in addition. Therefore the Psalmist says "I have to make a special effort that You should hear me, and not shut the gates of prayer in my face." I need to pray – that my prayer comes BEFORE YOU." Should You be distant from me, do not assign an angel to hear my prayer, but hear it Yourself O Lord!". I do not feel that I have to implore You to listen, but I implore that my prayer comes to You directly!.

3. We have explained the verse in Proverbs 8,17 "I love those who love Me" as meaning that the Torah which had boasted in the preceding verse how it grants wisdom to its students and lends them greatness, observes that many Torah scholars are very needy and where then is G'd's love for them?

To this complaint G'd answers that "I have proved My love, for if the Torah scholars pray to Me in years of drought I have answered their prayers, i.e. they were able to find Me." If I have granted them only a scant livelihood, this was for their own good as they realized when their prayers on behalf of their communities were answered by G'd immediately.

Another meaning may be that the supplicant says to G'd "true that I do not normally mind the discomfort and suffering imposed on me. I pray that should the occasion arise when I feel compelled to voice my anguish, You will NOT hide from my prayer etc. In fact, I hope that if such an occasion arises ***hateh elay oznecha***, Your ear will ALREADY be inclined to respond to my supplication".

4. The Psalmist expresses the concern of a person who may feel impelled to cry out to G'd complaining about the suffering imposed upon him, who is afraid that he will lose all his accumulated merits due to his resentment of G'd's justice. *Yomay*, my days, are the days that have become his own, since he had performed good deeds on them. The "smoke", in which these days dissolve, is generated by the burning of one's bones, is apt to pollute one's brain when it rises. The

6on account of my vehement groaning my bones show through my skin.
7I am like a great owl in the wilderness, an owl among the ruins.
8I lie awake; I am like a lone bird upon a roof.
9All day long my enemies revile me; my deriders use my name to curse.
10For I have eaten ashes like bread and mixed my drink with tears,
11because of Your wrath and Your fury; for You have cast me far away.

simile is meant to convey that if the supplicant displays faulty attitudes this is due to the physical suffering experienced, which has contaminated his mind.

5. This verse may be the Psalmist's reply to the accusation how he could possibly have become guilty of expressing resentment of his fate. On the verse in Job 38,33 that Job has no concept of how the horoscopic influences affect nature, Bereshit Rabbah 10,7 explains that every blade of grass has a *mazzal* beating it, telling it to grow etc. In other words, growth is due to the ability to absorb a beating. The Psalmist here replies that he is aware that personality growth is possible only through learning of how to cope with suffering, much as the grass only grows as a result of being "beaten". In fact, he is aware that his heart would "dry up" were it not for the *yissurim*, the afflictions.

Nonetheless, none of the *yissurim* are as effective in evoking personality growth as is the lack of bread. When Leviticus 26,26 threatens "when I break your staff of bread", this is considered the most severe affliction of them all. The Psalmist in saying "I have forgotten to eat my food", refers to the fact that it is so long since he has eaten, that he has forgotten what it is like to eat. In other words, his experience in exile has been so long drawn out that it is not surprising that his heart has dried out.

6. When the lung of an animal is punctured, and the punctured side is lodged firmly against the flesh of the chest cavity, such an animal remains fit to eat. (is not treif). If the lung is lodged partially against fleshy tissue and partially against bone, the matter becomes problematical. If the punctured part of the lung is lodged only against bone, the animal is *treif* unfit for consumption by Jews, since from time to time the lung will work itself loose. This produces a sound which escapes through the windpipe, a sound which is quite loud on

ז מִקּוֹל אַנְחָתִי דָּבְקָה עַצְמִי לִבְשָׂרִי:
ח דָּמִיתִי לְקָאַת מִדְבָּר הָיִיתִי כְּכוֹס חֳרָבוֹת:
ט שָׁקַדְתִּי וָאֶהְיֶה כְּצִפּוֹר בּוֹדֵד עַל-גָּג:
י כָּל-הַיּוֹם חֵרְפוּנִי אוֹיְבָי מְהוֹלָלַי בִּי נִשְׁבָּעוּ:
יא כִּי-אֵפֶר כַּלֶּחֶם אָכָלְתִּי וְשִׁקֻּוַי בִּבְכִי מָסָכְתִּי:
יב מִפְּנֵי-זַעַמְךָ וְקִצְפֶּךָ כִּי נְשָׂאתַנִי וַתַּשְׁלִיכֵנִי:

occasion when the lung is full of air and collapses subsequently. The Psalmist, in describing the tribulations of Israel in exile, exclaims that he would rather that Israel were anchored against flesh, i.e. a safe situation – than the "sounds of my sighs", a situation liable to result in death. The prefix *mi* then means "rather than" and not "from", in this instance.

7. Should you tell me that instead of relaxing, and praying only when faint, *ki ya-atof*, I would do better to offer prayer constantly when feeling faint, the Psalmist answers by relating something from his personal experience. At the beginning of exile, i.e. shortly after the destruction of the temple, *damiti likat midbar*, I was like the pelican in the desert, i.e. I cried constantly, non stop. This bird, being fat has the strength to sustain constant shouting. We derive *kik* oil from this bird. Since he lives in the desert, his shouting does not bother anybody. However, later, I became weak, and was more like the little owl found amongst the ruins, which wails only occasionally and only when no one is around to hear it.

8. I continued like this for a while, alert, *shakadti*. After a while however, I became totally dumb like a lonely bird on the roof which has no one to communicate with.

9. There are 2 categories of oppressor whom I face. One category taunts me all day long, or daily, something that does not make much of an impression on me. There is a second category, those who praise my present status, suggesting that I am better off since the temple has been destroyed. It is the latter *bi nishbe-u* who have truly conspired against me.

10. They claim that since prior to the destruction of the temple, when I ate bread like ash, i.e. when I suffered severely from famine, I was worse off than now, since I used to mix my drink with tears, i.e. three parts tears and one part wine.

11. My adversaries say that prior to G'd's anger, He had uplifted me to such an extent that when He dropped me, my enemies merely vanquished a people already broken. Now, in exile among the gentile

12My days are like a lengthening shadow; I wither like grass.
13But You, O LORD, are enthroned forever; Your fame endures throughout the ages.
14You will surely arise and take pity on Zion, for it is time to be gracious to her; the appointed time has come.
15Your servants take delight in its stones, and cherish its dust.
16The nations will fear the name of the LORD, all the kings of the earth, Your glory.

nations, at least I have adequate food, something I lacked before I went into exile.

12. As the shadows lengthen towards evening, Israel in exile describes the length of the exile as like the shadows which keep lengthening. The Psalmist expresses the hope that the very length of the exile will prove productive in reforming Israel's conduct, cause it to perform *mitzvot* and good deeds. However, Israel's experience during the lengthy exile unfortunately is not revival but a gradual withering away of its vital fluids, drying out like grass. Since this is so, the Psalmist questions the value of the ongoing exile, since G'd's name becomes increasingly desecrated instead of sanctified.

13. The Jew is concerned about the change within himself, not about the change in G'd. The Talmud Kiddushin 71, explains Exodus 3,15 "this is My name forever, and My memorial for all generations", to mean that the spelling of G'd's name i.e. *yud-heh-vav-heh* is different from the way we pronounce it when reading it, i.e. *a-don-ay*. Similarly, our Psalmist makes reference to this distinction in this verse, when contrasting *attah Hashem* and *zichre-cha*. G'd does not undergo change neither in the spelling or the reading of His name.

14. The Jew in exile in Babylonia (who is perceived of saying these lines) expresses his convictions "You will arise and have compassion with Zion"... The Midrash Eycha Rabbati relates that at the time of the destruction of the first temple, G'd swore that He would not have the temple rebuilt until the time would be ripe for Israel's FINAL redemption. When the patriarchs and their wives as well as Moses heard about this, and G'd heard the cries of Rachel, He said to her "stop crying, and dry your tears etc." (Jeremiah 31,15–16) i.e. that there would be a rebuilding of the temple BEFORE the final redemption.

David here foresees in his holy spirit the prayer that will be offered

יב יָמַי כְּצֵל נָטוּי וַאֲנִי כָּעֲשֵׂב אִיבָשׁ׃
יג וְאַתָּה יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תֵּשֵׁב וְזִכְרְךָ לְדֹר וָדֹר׃
יד אַתָּה תָקוּם תְּרַחֵם צִיּוֹן כִּי-עֵת לְחֶנְנָהּ כִּי-בָא מוֹעֵד׃
טו כִּי-רָצוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ אֶת-אַבְנֶיהָ וְאֶת-עֲפָרָהּ יְחֹנֵנוּ׃
טז וְיִירְאוּ גוֹיִם אֶת-שֵׁם יְהוָה וְכָל-מַלְכֵי הָאָרֶץ אֶת-כְּבוֹדֶךָ׃

by Jews in Babylonia, and requests from G'd that prior to the establishment of the ultimate temple which will be the handiwork of G'd, i.e. a spiritual rebirth, – that a physical reconstruction of the temple involving the stones and dust of Jerusalem should occur, much like the one the prophet Jeremiah talked about in the verse quoted.

When the prophet asks (Lamentations 5,20) "why will You forget us forever?" the meaning is "why will You forget us until the day of the final redemption?" Why will You not bring on a salvation in the intervening period?

The Jew in exile asks to have a chance to be grateful to G'd for what He will do over and beyond what He has avowed to do at the appointed time, when the Messiah MUST come.

15. Even though the eventual temple will be built of gemstones, the most refined of materials, Your servants now are anxious to have the temple rebuilt NOW, from the inferior materials available in the ruins of Jerusalem. They are dear to Israel, because they are its very own. They ask for G'd's favour, grace ***lechene-no*** – to be allowed to use those stones and that earth to become the second temple. This will be the consolation for the Jew suffering in exile.

16. As a by product of such temple being rebuilt, the nations will respect and fear the name of the Lord. The very people who used to dance in the ruins of the temple, whose conduct constituted a gross desecration of G'd's name, will be confounded. It was Haman who had reassured Ahasverus that the G'd of the Jews had become old and weak, else the G'd who had worked the miracles of Egypt and during the Exodus would not have stood by passively while pagans danced on the ruins of His sanctuary. (Midrash Rabbah Esther 7,13)

The rebuilding of the temple would rebut Haman's argument.

17. When Zion is rebuilt, G'd's honour will be restored in the eyes of the world, and that the Divine Presence had not totally left the Western Wall, but had only gone into hiding, will be demonstrated.

17For the LORD has built Zion; He has appeared in all His glory.
18He has turned to the prayer of the destitute and has not spurned their prayer.
19May this be written down for a coming generation, that people yet to be created may praise the LORD.
20For He looks down from His holy height; the LORD beholds the earth from heaven
21to hear the groans of the prisoner, to release those condemned to death;
22that the fame of the LORD may be recounted in Zion, His praises in Jerusalem,
23when the nations gather together, the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

This is what had occurred at the time Ahasverus had given instructions to stop the rebuilding of the temple. (Ezra, 4,23–24)

18. He turned to the prayer of the solitary person, (Mordechai) and did not despise the prayer of the people *tefillatam*. Even though the Jews of that generation had been guilty of death, He did not reject their pleas and saved them from the exile of the Medes and built the second temple for them because seeing this, the glory of G'd was restored amongst the nations.

19. A third advantage that accrued to Israel from all this, was that their confidence in a final redemption became reinforced, so that even hundreds of generations later, they would never despair of the eventual arrival of the Messiah.

The story portrayed in the book of Esther would forever remain a beacon of hope and sustain Jews in exile. They would realize that when G'd listened to the prayer of Mordechai and the pleas of the people, Israel had in fact become *am nivra* a newly created nation.

This is also how we explained Psalms 22,32 "they will declare His merciful justice to the newborn people that He has formed". The generation of Mordechai may be viewed as if they had been born a second time, since they had been dead for practical purposes after Haman's decree, and G'd had revived them.

This newly founded nation *yehallel y-oh* will praise the Lord. The 2 lettered name of G'd is used by the Psalmist, since this is the operative name of G'd as long as Amalek has not been annihilated.

20. Should one ask how the saving of the Jewish people from the decree of Haman relates to the prayers for the establishment of the second temple, – the subject of the Psalmist's prayer thus far, – the

יז כִּי-בָנָה יְהוָה צִיּוֹן נִרְאָה בִּכְבוֹדוֹ:
יח פָּנָה אֶל-תְּפִלַּת הָעַרְעָר וְלֹא בָזָה אֶת-תְּפִלָּתָם:
יט תִּכָּתֵב זֹאת לְדֹר אַחֲרוֹן וְעַם נִבְרָא יְהַלֶּל-יָהּ:
כ כִּי-הִשְׁקִיף מִמְּרוֹם קָדְשׁוֹ יְהוָה מִשָּׁמַיִם אֶל-אֶרֶץ הִבִּיט:
כא לִשְׁמֹעַ אֶנְקַת אָסִיר לְפַתֵּחַ בְּנֵי תְמוּתָה:
כב לְסַפֵּר בְּצִיּוֹן שֵׁם יְהוָה וּתְהִלָּתוֹ בִּירוּשָׁלָם:
כג בְּהִקָּבֵץ עַמִּים יַחְדָּו וּמַמְלָכוֹת לַעֲבֹד אֶת-יְהוָה:

answer is that once G'd looks down from on high, i.e. once the first two letters of His name are activated, He will transmit His bounty to the other two letters *vav-heh* i.e. earth. (which has been created with the help of those two letters) These two letters appeared unconnected to the other 2 letters of His name. (as we explained in connection with Exodus 17,16 "as long as a hand is raised against the incomplete throne of G'd).

21. "To hear the prisoner's cry of anguish", refers to Mordechai who was imprisoned in sackcloth and ashes, fasting in the public square. He had imposed these restrictions on himself (made himself a prisoner) in order to FREE his countrymen who were doomed to die and who were guilty.

22. The purpose of all this was not the saving of the Jews from death, but to institutionalize the reading of the story of Esther. Telling of the name of the G'd of Zion, is identical with relating the miracle recorded in the book of Esther.

This is the recitation of the greatness of G'd when Jerusalem is being rebuilt. Since all this occurred at the end of 70 years after the destruction of the first temple, it demonstrates that the prayer initiated by the solitary prisoner i.e. Mordechai, resulted in G'd looking down from Heaven benevolently, and the fact that this story is recorded, *tikatev*, will act as a beacon of hope to Jews throughout the ages. The whole purpose of the second temple then – though it too was doomed – is to tell of the greatness of G'd, that HE endures, and that we can be certain that ultimate redemption is in sight.

23. Having discussed the exiled Jew's attitude which resulted in the building of the second temple, the Psalmist now addresses himself to restoration of Jewish independence after the destruction of the second temple. He begins by saying: "when the nations gather

[24]He drained my strength in mid-course, He shortened my days.
[25]I say, "O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days, You whose years go on for generations on end.
[26]Of old You established the earth; the heavens are the work of Your hands.

together". He is paraphrasing prophecies both in Isaiah 2,2 and Micah 4,1, in which the prophets describe the temple mount as ready and firmly in position, and the nations as streaming towards it, expressing their desire to make pilgrimage to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the G'd of Jacob. (compare Rashi on Isaiah 2,2)

We have explained in our commentary on those verses that this is not a prediction that the nations will abandon their respective religions, rather, they will be ready to absorb instruction from G'd, and accept such instruction if it finds favour in their eyes. Israel is upset that THOSE nations should share in the G'd of Jacob WITHOUT having made a commitment to HIM.

24. Israel, i.e. the Psalmist, feels that G'd has weakened its strength and shortened its life span when it must look on how the nations ot the world want to share its glory without making a commitment.

25. I will say to G'd at that time "do not carry me off in the middle of my days". Even though my physical death would assure for me eternal life in the hereafter, I do not want to die prematurely because I want to see G'd triumph on earth before either my body or my soul leaves this earth. I want to be able to acknowledge and prostrate myself here on earth and to be shown G'd's Presence.

26. Concerning the next verse, there are serious differences of opinion if the meaning of the verse has to be understood literally. Scholars have observed apparent contradictions in different statements by the prophets concerning the indestructibility of our physical universe.

David says in Psalms 148,6 "He established them (sun and moon etc.) for all times". Jeremiah says (Jeremiah 31,35–36) "these laws of nature will never change" (referring to the functions of the sun and moon etc.)

On the other hand, we find verses such as Isaiah 51,6 "the heavens will vanish like smoke, and the earth will rot like a garment", as well as our own verse here, (27) "they will perish but YOU will endure"; YOU will change them (earth and heaven) like a garment".

כד עָנָּה בַדֶּרֶךְ כֹּחִי קִצַּר יָמָי:
כה אֹמַר אֵלִי אַל-תַּעֲלֵנִי בַּחֲצִי יָמָי בְּדוֹר דּוֹרִים
שְׁנוֹתֶיךָ:
כו לְפָנִים הָאָרֶץ יָסַדְתָּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ שָׁמָיִם:

The commentators are plagued by the apparent contradictions. Those who hold that the universe does not undergo change, are troubled by the 2 verses suggesting the reverse, whereas the commentators who believe in renewal of heaven and earth, have difficulty explaining those verses which suggest the constancy of our galaxy. Some endeavour to explain the problem by stating that heaven and earth will remain in essence, though they will undergo great changes in their detailed structure.

I do not hold either of those views. Looking at our verses here, we observe a contradiction. Verse 27 speaks first about the earth and heaven perishing, whereas it goes on to describe an exchange such as a change of worn out clothing. How can one talk about the CHANGING of attire, if the previous attire had been destroyed completely?

Besides, how does G'd who is purely spiritual, use "hands" to make heaven, something "spiritual"? (verse 26)

There is a contradiction in terms here, to ascribe the making of "murky" physical matter to the "hands" of G'd, the pure Spirit! We have raised this point on the verse in Genesis 2,7 "G'd shaped man, dust from the soil etc.", i.e. that in the words of our sages G'd kneaded the materials much like a woman making dough mixing it with water.

We must also try and appreciate that the raw material used for man was so refined, that even the angels were misled into thinking that man deserved to be acknowledged by them as holy, until G'd proved to them man's frailty when He showed them man asleep, devoid of his faculties, not in control of his body. (Bereshit Rabbah 8,10)

There is no question that at the time G'd created Adam, the raw material He used was so refined that the fact that His "hands" fashioned the "dry land" (Psalms 95,5) is no contradiction. This also makes plausible the statement of our sages (Vayikra Rabbah 20) that the *tapuach akevo*, the protruding part of Adam's heel, was capable of inflicting injury on the sun's orbit, how much more so his face!

It is also clear what our sages meant when they said that G'd used the dust beneath His throne to make the earth from. (We

[27]*They shall perish, but You shall endure; they shall all wear out like a garment; You change them like clothing and they pass away.*
[28]*But You are the same, and Your years never end.*

explained this in detail in our commentary on Genesis 1,24) The raw material man was made of may be viewed as like a garment. Just as angels when they enter our world assume a concrete appearance, i.e. wear some clothing, so man, prior to sin was predominantly spiritual and only marginally physical, of very refined matter.

Matter became "murky" only as a result of the curse which descended on earth subsequent to Adam's having eaten from the tree of knowledge. Our present composition is due to this phenomenon, and this is the reason death came into the world. Through death, rehabilitation can take place, and the *zuhama*, i.e. pollutant which has been absorbed by man can be eliminated.

The same applies to the world of galaxies whose raw materials were also downgraded at the time man sinned in *Gan Eden*. Our Psalmist refers to these phenomena.

The Jew in exile complains when he hears that at the end of his exile not only he (verse 23) but also the gentile nations will be "gathered in". He does not want them to have a share in the G'd of Israel. He says to G'd "do not raise me prematurely", *bachatzi yamai*, lest the gentiles will share in the G'd of Israel, something which he would consider like death for himself.

He contrasts the fact that during the Messianic age the universe will revert to its original form, i.e. will be of the most refined raw material as prior to Adam's sin, whereas the nations will perish *hema yovedu*. (verse 27)

Hence, it seems reasonable to the Jew represented by our Psalmist that *benay avadecha yishkonu*, "the sons of Your servants will be established firmly" (meaning exclusively).

The Psalmist emphasizes that during all the tremendous changes in nature occurring during the Messianic era, only G'd will remain constant. (verse 28)

He contrasts the destruction of the gentiles – i.e. an absolute irrevocable destruction with the rejuvenation of the world of galaxies and earth, both of which had originally been created of the most refined materials and need only undergo a refining process to return to their original state.

The metaphor of "they will rot like garments", means that changes which will occur in nature at that time, will affect only the exterior of

כז הֵמָּה יֹאבֵדוּ וְאַתָּה תַעֲמֹד וְכֻלָּם כַּבֶּגֶד יִבְלוּ כַּלְבוּשׁ
תַּחֲלִיפֵם וְיַחֲלֹפוּ׃
כח וְאַתָּה-הוּא וּשְׁנוֹתֶיךָ לֹא יִתָּמּוּ׃

the universe, NOT its essence. Garments after all are only an outer shell of man, not its substance. The way they disintegrate CANNOT be compared to the disintegration of the gentile nations, i.e. *hemah yovedu*, they will perish. Earth and the galaxies however, *ka-levush tachalifem*, You will exchange as one exchanges clothing, i.e. outer shells.

The fact that the Psalmist refers to *ka-levush* with the vowel *patach, a*, under the letter *kaf*, indicates a specific garment rather than any garment. This is a reference to the spiritual essence covered by such garment. The reference may be to the angel in Daniel 12,6 and other places, who appeared to Daniel dressed in linen. The *levush habadim*, is to be viewed as the most refined and sheer clothing – something suggesting pure spirituality.

The Psalmist suggests that when the world will be rejuvenated, – the raw material will once again be of such sheer and refined quality that it suggests proximity to the pure spirit. None of this for the pagans and their descendants.

27. Nonetheless, after the resurrection, they will all disintegrate and only G'd Himself will remain unchanged. The new galaxies and earth which will emerge, will be essentially spiritual in nature, seeing that the raw material they will consist of will be so pure and refined. This is what is meant by our Rabbis in Pessikta that "G'd clothed Himself in 10 layers of clothing when He began to create the universe".

This is the meaning of Psalms 104,1 "You have clothed Yourself with majesty and glory". THE *levush*, referred to in our verse is to be understood in a similar vein, i.e. the garment that enables the transition from something purely spiritual to something material. The process of quasi spiritualization of the universe will be the reverse of the process after Adam's sin, when the progressive materialization of an originally almost spiritual universe occurred.

28, None of this will affect You O Lord. The use of the word *hoo* in addition to *attah ushenotecha* indicates that the Psalmist is aware that the comparisons which were implied when one addresses someone directly, i.e. *attah* you, apply only to a limited degree. The reference to someone as "he", as is customary when addressing superiors such as Royalty, is used to underline that the Psalmist is

29*May the children of Your servants dwell securely and their offspring endure in Your presence."*

103 *Of David.*
Bless the LORD, O my soul, all my being, His holy name.
2*Bless the LORD, O my soul and do not forget all His bounties.*
3*He forgives all your sins, heals all your diseases.*

aware of what separates G'd from any of His creations or creatures. In the future, "HE and Your years will not cease", means, that His Presence and the awareness of His Presence will be one, there will never again be a *galut shechinah*, a situation when G'd feels that He has to withdraw His observable Presence from His creatures.

29. Having described the refined state of "heaven" and earth of the future, it sounds incredible that man in his material state can live on such a planet. The Psalmist therefore assures us that *benay avadecha*, that those people who will then have been resurrected, i.e. descendants of the patriarchs, will be of raw material that is compatible with the state of the universe at that time.

They will be capable of remaining *yachon*, steadfast before You, unimpaired by the evil urge. The "fire" at the revelation of Mount Sinai, which even the Israelites at that time were afraid of, and which caused them to ask Moses to be their intermediary, – will not frighten those people of the future who are described here.

Psalm 103

1. Our sages (Talmud Pessachim 119) describe a feast which G'd will prepare in Gan Eden at a future time for the righteous, at which the patriarchs including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David will be present. When Abraham is offered the honour of leading the others in saying grace, he declines, saying that he is not worthy seeing he had fathered an Ishmael. Isaac also declines, citing his son Esau as the reason. Jacob declines, saying that since he had married two sisters during their respective lifetime, he too was not deserving of that honour. Moses and Joshua all decline citing their respective shortcomings, until David is willing to accept the honour saying that it is fitting for him to proclaim "I will raise the cup of salvation and proclaim the name of the Lord." (Psalms 116,13)

We also know from our tradition that Adam-David-Messiah are identified as one. In addition the Zohar claims that the 3 patriarchs each contained a fraction of the soul of Adam.

כט בְּנֵי-עַבְדֶּיךָ יִשְׁכֹּונוּ וְזַרְעָם לְפָנֶיךָ יִכּוֹן׃

קג א לְדָוִד בָּרְכִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת-יְהוָה וְכָל-קְרָבַי אֶת-שֵׁם קָדְשׁוֹ׃
ב בָּרְכִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת-יְהוָה וְאַל-תִּשְׁכְּחִי כָּל-גְּמוּלָיו׃
ג הַסֹּלֵחַ לְכָל-עֲוֹנֵכִי הָרֹפֵא לְכָל-תַּחֲלוּאָיְכִי׃

Here David is presented in dialogue with his own soul, urging her to rejoice for having re-emerged within his body. "Bless the Lord", i.e. because you have been reincarnated in my body, and have been given an opportunity to praise the Lord.

kol krovay, refers to the parts of the innards which participate in the procreative process. They are attached to His holy name. I, says David, am FIT to bless the Lord, since the shortcomings which the patriarchs suffered from (all of which were connected with their procreative areas, – i.e. unfit children or halachically forbidden wives, or no children (Joshua)) do not apply to me.

2. Another reason for the repetition of the call *borchi nafshi*, let my soul bless G'd and not forget", may be the fact that David who had been meant to be a premature baby with no life expectancy, and whose 70 years of life had been donated by Adam giving up the equivalent number of years from his own life (Bereshit Rabbah 22), is reminding himself and his body to be grateful for his existence. He had to thank G'd (in his capacity as Adam's alter ego) "for having been granted eternal life, i.e. "David king of Israel is alive and endures". (Rosh Hashanah 25) This was an act of kindness by G'd who by right could have decreed absolute death on Adam for transgressing the commandment not to eat from the tree of knowledge. (Genesis 3,3) The dual *borchi nafshi* then is both on his own behalf and on behalf of his ancestor Adam.

The reason that the second *borchi nafshi* does not mention *krovay*, my intestines, my body, is, that it refers to the gratitude of the soul which was given a chance to achieve its purpose on earth through reincarnation in David's body.

3. The words "who forgives all your crookedness" therefore refer to Adam's sin.

The Talmud Sukka 26, describes David as not having slept more than a horse, i.e. 60 breaths. Since sleep is equated with 1/60th of death, not sleeping properly is equivalent to one's body not experiencing even a taste of "death". Hence the statement quoted

4He redeems your life from the Pit, surrounds you with steadfast love and mercy.
5He satisfies you with good things in the prime of life, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

from Rosh Hashanah 25, that "David king of Israel was alive and endures".

David makes the point that the diseases he may have suffered from, and from which G'd had healed him, were due to him hosting the soul of Adam. They had not been due to sins he had committed in his capacity as David. He had suffered these diseases in order to expiate on behalf of Adam.

4. He had redeemed you from *shachat*, i.e. Gehinom, purgatory. Adam was described as a heretic etc. (Sanhedrin 38) and therefore slated for purgatory, for eternal damnation. However, G'd redeemed him from such a fate. Not only this, but He even granted him life in *Gan Eden*, i.e. the place where the righteous are found decorated with crowns on their heads, *atarot*. These "crowns" are conceived of as a visible display of the merits acquired by their respective wearers during their life on this earth.

All this is based on the Midrash Rabbah Parshat Aykev which describes the betrothal between G'd and Israel. It describes Israel as the bride, contributing 2 items to the marriage, i.e. *tzedakah* and *mishpat* (righteousness and justice), (compare Genesis 18,19) whereas G'd's contribution was *chessed* and *rachamim* (kindness and mercy) as per Hoseah 2,21.

David was crowned with *tzedek* and *mishpat*, as is written "David performed justice and righteousness", (Samuel II, 8,15). Therefore G'd had to make His contribution of "loving kindness and mercy", i.e. *chessed verachamim*.

5. We have explained that the David who is saying these words is the David who converses with his counterpart, the soul of the reincarnated Adam. This soul is conceived of as the "soul" of mankind, with special emphasis on the soul of the Jewish nation.

Israel would have been especially hurt, had Adam's punishment not been converted in some form or other. Mankind would have been doomed altogether from the start of history.

Having told his alter ego, i.e. Adam, not to fail to express his gratitude to G'd (in verses 1 and 2), he now proceeds to list the most important single benefit G'd bestowed upon him by allowing reincarnation through David as a step towards his rehabilitation. Originally, G'd had created Adam to live forever. By sinning, he had forfeited this gift. David was the first person to experience a partial

ד הַגּוֹאֵל מִשַּׁחַת חַיָּיְכִי הַמְעַטְּרֵכִי חֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים:
ה הַמַּשְׂבִּיעַ בַּטּוֹב עֶדְיֵךְ תִּתְחַדֵּשׁ כַּנֶּשֶׁר נְעוּרָיְכִי:

rehabilitation, seeing that during his lifetime he did not taste any aspect of death. (as we explained in connection with his mode of sleep) He also became the symbol of an ongoing existence, *chay vekayam*.

This rehabilitation will become effective principally in the future when death will be banished from mankind, and all of Israel will enjoy an ongoing life, free from pollutants absorbed through the serpent after the sin in *Gan Eden*.

Still, the Jew is bound to wonder how he can be certain that he will indeed be rehabilitated in Messianic times, even if the process had already begun for David. How does he know that this process will be completed with the coming of the Messiah? After all, at Mount Sinai, (during the revelation) we had once before shed all vestiges of this pollutant, only to have relapsed again due to the sin of the golden calf. David answers that there is no fear of this. He blessed G'd because He had granted him his full life, i.e. *masbiyah* "of the goodness as is our jewelry". Hence he feels sure that this time the rehabilitation will be irreversible.

In our commentary on the Torah in Parshat Ki Tissa, we explained the verse (Exodus 33,5) "now remove your jewelry from yourself and I will know what I shall do to you". This is what Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai referred to when he said that at Sinai Israel had been given an armament which bore the inscription of the ineffable name of G'd. Later this inscription was peeled off. This is the *eydecha*, your jewelry, referred to by David.

Similarly, we read in the Talmud Shabbat 88, in the name of Rabbi Simai, that when Israel had declared its readiness to accept the Torah by saying "we will do and we will listen" (Exodus 24,7), 600000 angels came and attached crowns to the head of each Israelite, whereas when they committed the sin of the golden calf, 1.2 million angels came and removed these crowns as is written "the children of Israel had their jewelry removed" (Exodus 33,6).

We have stated that the merit of having said "we will do – and subsequently we will hear", resulted in G'd endowing them with the sanctity that would save them from the onset of various exiles and would protect them against death. This sanctity (the power of holiness) inhibited the negative forces in the world, the *chitzoniot* and the latter dared not attack Israel. This is the *cherut*, freedom, from temporal adversaries as well as from the angel of death. The

[6]The LORD executes righteous acts and judgments for all who are wronged.

Midrash quoted refers to this as *zayin*, weaponry, i.e. the ineffable name etched on the Israelite.

When the Midrash in Parshat Devarim relates that when the angel of death came to Moses to claim his soul, Moses mentioned the ineffable name of G'd and put the angel of death to flight, the idea is the very same we find in the Midrash quoted above. Had Israel been able to maintain its lofty moral position after the revelation, there would have occurred neither exile nor death.

On the other hand, their hope of TOTAL rehabilitation would have been dashed, since the last vestige of the pollutants absorbed through the sin in *Gan Eden* can ONLY be eliminated through death and the refining of the body through prior merging with the earth, the dust. Only at the time of the re-surrection will man emerge totally cleansed of such pollutants.

Also exile is needed to precede death,– to set in motion the refinement process.

It is this thought that was expressed by Rabbi Meir in Bereshit Rabbah 9,5, on the verse "and here it was very good". (Genesis 1,31) The word "very good" according to Rabbi Meir is a reference to death, i.e. death is "very good".

When G'd asked Israel to remove its jewelry, He did so in order that their chance of ultimate TOTAL rehabilitation from the serpent's pollutant would not be denied them. Absence of exile and death would PREVENT their ultimate glorious future from materialising. The words "I will know" (Exodus 33,5) then is an expression of G'ds mercy and love, just as the word *yada*, know, frequently is used as an expression of love. (compare Genesis 4,1 "and Adam knew (loved) his wife")

G'd tells Israel that what He is able to do for them IN THE FUTURE depends on their removing their "jewelry", i.e. weaponry AT THIS TIME.

The Psalmist therefore can reassure Israel that they need not be afraid of a repetition of what had happened after the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai,– since at that time their status had not been an ABSOLUTE one.

Midrash Chazit relates that after receiving the 10 commandments, Israel asked G'd to request that He remove the evil urge from them. Moses replied that this would not happen at that time, but only at some point in the future since Israel's rehabilitation had not yet been total, seeing the whole earth was still infested with the pollutants of

עֹשֶׂה צְדָקוֹת יְהוָה וּמִשְׁפָּטִים לְכָל-עֲשׁוּקִים׃

the serpent. The repentance of Israel subsequent to the Exodus represented a *netiyah*, an inclination towards the "good". In return for this inclination they had received the "jewelry" at that time. They had not however *sav-oo*, "satiated" themselves with the *tov*, the path of goodness. Hence, a relapse had been easily possible. In the future– says the Psalmist– G'd will be *massbiyah betov* will provide goodness to a saturation point, so that the "jewelry" will be enduring, thus eliminating the pollutant once and for all.

You will regain YOUR youths (pl) like the eagle (i.e. swiftly). The emphasis on *ne-uroychi*, YOUR youths, instead of "youth like that of an eagle" is a reference to man's state of innocence BEFORE the sin of Adam. This is also in line with the statement (Tanchumah Parshat Pekudey) that Adam's soul incorporated all souls of future mankind. Hence EVERY soul of anyone born after Adam, already had been sullied BEFORE it entered its respective body.

This would explain why even though rejuvenation took place at Mount Sinai, – i.e. that Israel became like "a youngster", *na-ar*, they could not get away from the fact that they were descended from Adam.

6. Should David's soul reply that seeing that he hosted Adam's soul it was understandable that he seemed to be suffering disproportionately for his sins, he had to expiate also for Adam, he also had reason to give thanks for all the good he experienced.

However, why would other Israelites who are not the reincarnates of Adam have to suffer so?

It appears that the only ones experiencing goodness are the gentiles, those who have no claim on reward AND do not even suffer seeing they too are descended from Adam? The Israelites ask if they therefore need to assume that G'd runs the universe on the attribute of justice rather than on the attribute of mercy?

In answer to all this the Psalmist explains that G'd's mercy expresses itself often when we observe people being oppressed *ashukim*. Instead of exacting whatever punishment they are guilty of in purgatory, He punishes them in this life, thus preserving their eternal life. We see therefore that the *mishpatim*, judgments which He imposes on the *ashukim* oppressed, are actually a facet of the "charity" *tzidkut* with which Hashem, the attribute of mercy is at work, i.e. *osseh*.

7/8. We had read in Parshat Ki Tissa that in answer to Moses' request "acquaint me please with Your ways", (Exodus 33,13) G'd had

7He made known His ways to Moses, His deeds to the children of Israel.
8The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love.
9He will not contend forever, or nurse His anger for all time.
10He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor has He requited us according to our iniquities.
11For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him.
12As east is far from west, so far has He removed our sins from us.

taught Moses to invoke His thirteen attributes (Exodus 34,6–7) in times of distress. Moses had been assured then that when Israel – in supplication – would turn to G'd to invoke the respective attributes, such supplicants would not be turned away empty handed.

Experience seems to have shown that many times when these very attributes have been invoked in our prayers, we have not felt any response.

The author explains that he has heard the following explanation concerning this (source *livnat hasappir*). The Talmud is careful to phrase G'd's promise as "they shall do before Me", not simply "they shall SAY before Me", i.e. invoke My attributes. (Rosh Hashanah 17) G'd does not want the supplicant to invoke His attributes merely with his lips, but He wants the supplicant to model himself according to the Divine attributes he is invoking. When people who invoke G'd's attributes do this, then He can promise that their prayers will find a ready response. This is what the Psalmist has in mind in his reference to G'd's attributes mentioned in our verse.

9. The Psalmist here points out the advantage of suffering punishment in this world. In our world, the publicity, i.e. the shame attached to being disciplined by G'd is limited both in time and in space. Were such punishment to be deferred till after death, – the publicity would extend to all the souls in the celestial regions, the embarrassment of the soul being punished could then never be lived down completely.

By *yariv*, i.e. by quarrelling with man already in this life, – G'd is able to restrain man from sinning so severely that He would have to reserve most of the punishment for the hereafter, with the dire consequences just described.

ז יוֹדִיעַ דְּרָכָיו לְמֹשֶׁה לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲלִילוֹתָיו׃
ח רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן יְהוָה אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב-חָסֶד׃
ט לֹא-לָנֶצַח יָרִיב וְלֹא לְעוֹלָם יִטּוֹר׃
י לֹא כַחֲטָאֵינוּ עָשָׂה לָנוּ וְלֹא כַעֲוֹנֹתֵינוּ גָּמַל עָלֵינוּ׃
יא כִּי כְגֹבַהּ שָׁמַיִם עַל-הָאָרֶץ גָּבַר חַסְדּוֹ עַל-יְרֵאָיו׃
יב כִּרְחֹק מִזְרָח מִמַּעֲרָב הִרְחִיק מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת-פִּשְׁעֵינוּ׃

10. The Psalmist tells the person who feels that what he suffers in this life is worse than anything that could happen to him after death, by saying "He has NOT disciplined us in accordance with our sins". Our sins really deserved FAR more in the way of retribution than G'd has seen fit to impose on us.

Had punishment been delayed until after death, we would find ourselves victims of the very negative forces *malachey chabbalah* – which our sins create. We would experience such forces in all their cruelty. Since we have been disciplined in this life however, we are being disciplined by a father who loves his child.

11. If G'd did not punish us in accordance with our sins, this was due to the patriarchs accumulating merits during their lives and not consuming their reward, not even the dividends of their reward. As a result, a reservoir of *chessed*, kindness (of the undeserved kind) was built up, which G'd used to exercise with their descendants (us). 500 years' worth of such *chessed* was kept in reserve. (the combined life span of the patriarchs)

Gavar means that this reservoir of *chessed* kept getting greater. Similarly, Jacob says that his blessing to his son Joseph is greater than the blessing he had received from his own father. (Genesis 49,26) The children of Jacob had become the beneficiaries of such unused reward due to the patriarchs. Our sages described the expression *ki-yemay hashamyin al ha-aretz* in Deut. 11,21 as referring to the combined lifetime of the patriarchs, i.e. 500 years. (The reference is to the "long life promised to the descendants of the patriarchs" (mentioned in this verse).

12. Another way G'd has helped us is, when we consider the distance from "East to West." The numerical value of *hasatan*, Satan is 364; i.e. G'd gave Satan domain over only 364 out of the 365 days of the year. On the Day of Atonement we are not subject to his influence. Satan's negative influence manifests itself through the *malachey chabalah* created by our sins which act as *kategorim*, accusers against us except on that day. Judgment or pardon are

13*As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for those who fear Him.*
14*For He knows how we are formed; He is mindful that we are dust.*
15*Man, his days are like those of grass; he blooms like a flower of the field;*
16*a wind passes by and it is no more, its own place no longer knows it.*
17*But the LORD's steadfast love is for all eternity toward those who fear Him, and His beneficence is for the children's children*
18*of those who keep His covenant and remember to observe His precepts.*

administered only during daylight hours, not at night. Thus 12 hours are available for the judgment, i.e. from sunrise to sunset. As these 12 hours from sunrise to sunset are as distant from one another as East from West (the sun rising in the East and setting in the West), G'd has kept our sins away from us i.e. *hirchik mimenu et pesha-eynu– kirchok mizrach mi-ma-arav*, as far as East is from West.

13. At the same time, G'd does not diminish the rewards due to the patriarchs, seeing that He has allowed their descendants to collect same. Rather, *rachem Hashem al yerei-ov* G'd continues to extend His mercy to those who revere Him, i.e. the patriarchs.

The *keren*, the capital of their reward (as distinct from the dividends) remains intact. His kindness is *gavar*, powerful in the "high" places.

14. G'd who knows our psyche, realizes that unless He disciplines us in this world, we would forfeit our share in the world to come, since the evil urge would become too powerful. Therefore, though we may not APPRECIATE His mercy when we suffer afflictions, it is an act of MERCY all the same. Even if we should question the need for *yissurim* by quoting the author of the Mishnah in Avot 3,1, in which Akavyah reminds us of 3 considerations which act as deterrent to the lures of the evil urge, – G'd says that the power of the evil urge is so strong that even the constant awareness of our destiny to die and give an accounting of our lifestyle, is not a strong enough deterrent.

G'd's disciplinary measures therefore are the only guarantee that we will not forfeit our share in the hereafter.

15. Even the knowledge that life is short, that we do not have

יג כְּרַחֵם אָב עַל-בָּנִים רִחַם יְהוָה עַל-יְרֵאָיו:
יד כִּי-הוּא יָדַע יִצְרֵנוּ זָכוּר כִּי-עָפָר אֲנָחְנוּ:
טו אֱנוֹשׁ כֶּחָצִיר יָמָיו כְּצִיץ הַשָּׂדֶה כֵּן יָצִיץ:
טז כִּי רוּחַ עָבְרָה-בּוֹ וְאֵינֶנּוּ וְלֹא-יַכִּירֶנּוּ עוֹד מְקוֹמוֹ:
יז וְחֶסֶד יְהוָה מֵעוֹלָם וְעַד-עוֹלָם עַל-יְרֵאָיו וְצִדְקָתוֹ
לִבְנֵי בָנִים:
יח לְשֹׁמְרֵי בְרִיתוֹ וּלְזֹכְרֵי פִקֻּדָיו לַעֲשׂוֹתָם:

much time during which to indulge ourselves in this life, is not an adequate deterrent against our desire for immediate gratification which is the cause of most of our sins. Even the constant awareness that ever since birth we are steadily approaching death, i.e. dust, is not sufficient to stop us from sinning.

16. Having been subjected to G'd's disciplinary actions, *yissurim*, in this life, brings another benefit, namely, at the time of death, *ruach ovrah bo*, he will die an easy death, like a passing breath. He need not be reincarnated to achieve the *tachlit*, the purpose he has failed to achieve in his first life here on earth. "He will not again have to recognize this place" i.e. he will not have to return to earth to live a second time on this planet. When he will return, i.e. at the time of the resurrection, earth will have been completely rejuvenated, and he will not recognize it, *velo yakkirenu od*.

17. A further benefit which accrues to the person who suffers his afflictions in this life, is that in the hereafter, his share will not only be the dividends he did not receive in this life, i.e. *chessed* which will endure indefinitely, *me-olam ad olam*, but G'd will add to this a measure of *tzidkato*, from His charity for the benefit of his descendants, i.e. *livney banim*.

18. This will manifest itself when these descendants observe the commandments, do not defile themselves. Otherwise, the *malachey chabbalah* who will exact retribution will not distinguish between the guilty and the relatively guilty.

Those descendants must at least be positively disposed towards G'd's commandments, i.e. *zochrey pikudav la-assotam* when they recall G'd's commandments they must intend to fulfil them.

19. David, in conversation with his soul, adds another reason why it is incumbent on the soul to bless G'd. (verses 1–2)

The renewal of the universe when it happens will affect 3 worlds, i.e. the world of the angels, the galaxies and our world down here.

19*The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and*
His sovereign rule is over all.
20*Bless the LORD, O His angels, mighty creatures who*
do His bidding, ever obedient to His bidding;
21*bless the LORD, all His hosts, His servants who do His*
will; bless the LORD, all His works, through the length
and breadth of His realm;
22*bless the LORD, O my soul.*

104 *Bless the LORD, O my soul; O LORD, my God, You are very great; You are clothed in glory and majesty,*

Even those of our sages who consider the angels as having been created at an early stage of creation, all agree that the world of angels was NOT created before the second day.

When G'd had reviewed His handiwork, (Genesis 1,31) "the Lord saw ALL that He had made", this certainly included the world of the angels. David therefore says that G'd's throne is firm not only when we have visual evidence of His Presence within our "lower" world, but even when He has withdrawn such visible evidence of His Presence on earth, He is still totally in charge of the world of galaxies and the world of angels. The vowel *ah*, Patach, under the word *bacol* means, that He rules in ALL the known worlds (the worlds of whose existence we know). The Psalmist refers to the *kol* mentioned in Genesis 1,37.

20. David tells his soul, i.e. the soul of Adam which comprises ALL souls, especially all the souls of Israel, that it should remember that man is on a higher level than the angels. The latter bless G'd seeing they are *giborey koach, ossey devaro* they have to do His bidding though they possess formidable strength, having heard *kol devaro*, the sound of His voice.

21. Similarly, he calls on all *tzevaov* i.e. His galaxies to bless the Lord since they are all His attendants, carrying out His will.

22. Finally, the Psalmist calls on our lower world to bless the Lord, since His *memshelet* sovereignty extends to all sites in our planet even outside the land of Israel. At the very end, "Bless the Lord my soul", we, i.e. Israel does not NEED A REASON to bless the Lord such as had been given for the angels galaxies and earth, but *et Hashem*, because we are PART of G'd, i.e. *ki chelek Hashem ammo*, we are an inextricable part of G'd".

יט יְהוָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם הֵכִין כִּסְאוֹ וּמַלְכוּתוֹ בַּכֹּל מָשָׁלָה:
כ בָּרְכוּ יְהוָה מַלְאָכָיו גִּבֹּרֵי כֹחַ עֹשֵׂי דְבָרוֹ לִשְׁמֹעַ
בְּקוֹל דְּבָרוֹ:
כא בָּרְכוּ יְהוָה כָּל-צְבָאָיו מְשָׁרְתָיו עֹשֵׂי רְצוֹנוֹ:
כב בָּרְכוּ יְהוָה כָּל-מַעֲשָׂיו בְּכָל-מְקֹמוֹת מֶמְשַׁלְתּוֹ בָּרְכִי
נַפְשִׁי אֶת-יְהוָה:

קד

א בָּרְכִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת-יְהוָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהַי גָּדַלְתָּ מְאֹד הוֹד
וְהָדָר לָבָשְׁתָּ:

Psalm 104

1. Our Rabbis in Pessikta 10, stated that G'd garbed Himself in 10 layers of garments when He set out to create the world. This is what is meant by ***hod vehadar lavashta*** "You have clothed Yourself with glory and majesty". When considering the 7 items that were created prior to the creation of the universe (Pessachim 54), one of which was the throne of G'd, – we must try and understand why there was a need for the throne of G'd to be created BEFORE the universe.

At the same time we need to comprehend the statement of Rabbi Eliezer (Bereshit Rabbah 3,4) that G'd draped the light of the 6 days of creation around Himself like a gown, and dazzled the universe from one end to the other with His glory, and then proceeded to create the universe".

Is it not staggering our imagination that He, the essence of spirituality, should associate Himself with creating mere physical matter instead of entrusting such a task to angels as His intermediaries?

However, we have it on the authority of both Torah, the books of prophets as well as the Hagiographa that such a thought must not be entertained at all!!

The universe was created directly by G'd Himself! It was He who had said "let there be light", let there be sky", etc. (Genesis chapter 1.)

The prophets are at pains to tell us "I the Lord am spanning the heavens (by Myself) and stretch the earth, who is with Me?" (Isaiah 44,24.)

Our sages also say that there is unanimous agreement that the angels were not created on the first day of creation so that people should not be able to say that the archangels Gabriel and Michael

2wrapped in a robe of light; You spread the heavens like a tent cloth.
3He sets the rafters of His lofts in the waters, makes the clouds His chariot, moves on the wings of the wind.

each assisted in stretching the universe to the South and North respectively. (Bereshit Rabbah, 1,4.)

In the Hagiographa (Psalms 33,6) we read, "the heavens were made by the word of G'd, and their hosts by the breath of His mouth."

David may be explaining that G'd needed to "clothe" Himself in screens in order for the lower world to be able to tolerate His emanations. Just like we cannot look at the sun without protective tinted glasses, on bright days maybe even an extra layer of glasses, so G'd protects His universe by shielding Himself, putting "screens" around Himself.

By building the "throne of His glory", G'd interposed a screenlike partition between Himself and the physical universe. This "throne" can be viewed as a light more suffused than that originally created. Since this light still proved too brilliant for the material universe to endure without damage, G'd created the world of angels. In the words of our Kabbalists, the sphere of G'd's throne is viewed as *olam ha-briyah*, whereas the world of angels is viewed as *olam ha-yetzirah*. Between they are viewed as 2 layers of "clothing" surrounding the Creator. These are what the Pessikta quoted referred to as *hod*, i.e. *olam habriyah* and *hadar*, i.e. *olam ha-yetzirah* glory and majesty respectively, according to its plain meaning. *Hod* would be referring to the sphere of G'd's throne since it is the source of all benevolent emanations. Examples for that meaning of *hod* in scripture are (Numbers 27,20) "May You give from Your Majesty on him" (Joshua)

The adjective *hadar* on the other hand is used to describe the glorious impression made on someone or something in the eyes of the beholder, i.e. something or somebody VISIBLE. The main reason the Midrash lists the "Throne of Honour" among the items created prior to the creation of the universe is, so that we appreciate that this is where materialization began originally. Once the world of angels had been created, the *olam ha-yetzirah*, the physical universe the *olam ha-assiyah* could come into being, i.e. heaven and earth and all that belongs in it.

David addresses his soul who has been transplanted into this *olam ha-assiyah*, physical, material universe from the *olam ha-elyon* higher world, and he formulates the wording of the benediction i.e.

ב עֹטֶה אוֹר כַּשַּׂלְמָה נוֹטֶה שָׁמַיִם כַּיְרִיעָה:
ג הַמְקָרֶה בַמַּיִם עֲלִיּוֹתָיו הַשָּׂם עָבִים רְכוּבוֹ הַמְהַלֵּךְ
עַל-כַּנְפֵי-רוּחַ:

Hashem elokay gadalta me-od, the reason I call You "my G'd" is because You have created the physical universe in which we are to observe Your Torah.

"You have not only not suffered a diminution of Your Honour by having created the physical universe, but, on the contrary, *gadalta me-od* You have enhanced Your greatness". Your personal involvement in creating the universe and having gone to the trouble of clothing Yourself in light, is a credit to Your greatness!

2. Your *hod* consisted out of Your using light to drape Yourself in, – which is what the Midrash meant when it said "G'd clothed Himself in a gown", i.e. You created the throne of Your glory to safeguard the world from the damaging effects of Your emanations, much like a human being's clothing shields him from the people.

Light separates between the universe and the Essence of G'd. Having done this, G'd could incline heaven like a carpet, i.e. stretch out the world of angels, the *olam ha-yetzirah* which in turn is shielded from G'd by the "throne of His glory". Subsequently came the galaxies and earth.

3. Concerning the world of galaxies, the Psalmist says "who fashions His upper chambers from water as if they were beams". This refers to the "middle" drop of water referred to in Midrash Rabbah on (Genesis 1,7). We explained there that the "waters" mentioned in that chapter are not all of the same category. The "upper" waters were spiritual in nature and are therefore called by the Torah *peney hamayim*, whereas the "lower" waters, the physical ones are called *peney tehom*. These "lower" waters had been enveloped in darkness, i.e. "and there was darkness on the face of the *tehom*. (Genesis 1,2)

When the Midrash said that the universe was "all water", the meaning is that these categories of waters were mixed up, and had not yet been separated. They incorporated both physical and spiritual properties indiscriminately. When G'd took the "middle" drop, He framed it into refined matter and made the world of galaxies from that material. Hence the galaxies are referred to as "the waters above the *rakiyah*, horizon.

The Midrash also says that the same distance that separates the "lower" waters from the sky, separates the sky from the "upper" waters.

4He makes the winds His messengers, fiery flames His servants.
5He established the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never totter.
6You made the deep cover it as a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.
7They fled at Your blast, rushed away at the sound of Your thunder,
8—mountains rising, valleys sinking— to the place You established for them.

The Psalmist refers to *bemayim* the water which separates between the physical and the spiritual "water" (possibly in our terms the spiritual "water" is hydrogen, comment by this translator)

Still, the question remains that it is not in keeping with the dignity of a pure Spirit such as G'd to personally descend into the *avim*, i.e. the 4 basic elements that comprise the material world.

We have evidence that Adam was the carrier of G'd's Presence, since AFTER the sin the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, withdrew to the lowest of the 7 *rekiyim*, heavens.

We know that G'd descended on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19,20). The Psalmist therefore explains that even though we have observed that G'd made the material world, i.e. *avim*, His *rechuvo* vehicle, the fact is that He moves *al peney ruach* over the 4 camps of the *Shechinah* which themselves are above the heaven. The "descent" on Mount Sinai is to be understood as a descent to the *mercavah*, entourage of His angels which were at that time above Sinai. (compare Psalm 68,18).

4. Proof that G'd does not make DIRECT use of the material universe is that even His angels are only *ruach*, and *aysh lohet*, wind and flaming fire.

5. Having explained that the very creation of matter did not diminish the greatness of G'd in any way, we must explain why G'd would create a universe that was in constant danger of disintegration unless spiritual input was maintained on an ongoing basis. "He established earth securely on its foundations", is a reference to the 30 righteous men who will be alive in each generation. Their existence guarantees the continuance of the earth as we know it. All this is based on the concept that *bishvil Torah shenikra reyshit bara hashem et ha-olam*, for the sake of Torah which is called *reyshit*, genesis, G'd created the universe. This is what Solomon referred to when he said (Eccles. 1,40) "a generation

ד עֹשֶׂה מַלְאָכָיו רוּחוֹת מְשָׁרְתָיו אֵשׁ לֹהֵט:
ה יָסַד-אֶרֶץ עַל-מְכוֹנֶיהָ בַּל-תִּמּוֹט עוֹלָם וָעֶד:
ו תְּהוֹם כַּלְבוּשׁ כִּסִּיתוֹ עַל-הָרִים יַעַמְדוּ-מָיִם:
ז מִן-גַּעֲרָתְךָ יְנוּסוּן מִן-קוֹל רַעַמְךָ יֵחָפֵזוּן:
ח יַעֲלוּ הָרִים יֵרְדוּ בְקָעוֹת אֶל-מְקוֹם זֶה יָסַדְתָּ לָהֶם:

comes and a generation goes and the earth continues forever". Because of the righteous who die and are replaced by other righteous men, the universe can keep going. (compare Bamidbar Rabbah 3,1)

Our sages, basing themselves on Genesis 1,9, "let the waters collect" have said that G'd had made an agreement with the waters that at the appropriate time, they would flood the earth again. (Bereshit Rabbah 5)

The flood during the era of Enosh, i.e. when one third of the earth's surface was permanently flooded, as well as at the time of the *mabbul* deluge in the days of Noach, was the subject of this agreement. The waters had been arranged in such a fashion that they towered over the earth (dry land) as if ready to flood earth at any moment. G'd wanted that the waters should inspire fear of Him.

We also have a tradition that G'd had agreed with the waters that when the time came they would part, to allow the Israelites to cross the sea of reeds and for the Egyptians to be drowned in them when they (the waters) resumed their normal position. (Shemot Rabbah 21,6)

One could challenge the Psalmist who implies that G'd had given permanence to earth by the fact that there would always be enough *tzaddikim* to guarantee its survival. The fact is that during the era of Enosh or Noah there were not enough *tzaddikim*, i.e. the waters stood higher than the mountains, *al harim ya-amdu mayim.*

7. "They flee at Your rebuke etc." refers to the waters receding to let the Israelites pass, just like in Psalms 114,3.

8. These phenomena were not meant to be permanent. Just as the waters rose in the time of Enosh, so the mountains in turn rose and the valleys descended to this place You had assigned for them since You had established them. This is the meaning of Job 38,11, "I have said you may come as far as here, – no further; this is where the proud waves will be stayed". Since the flooding of a third of the then existing land mass at the time of Enosh, the waters have been assigned permanent borders.

9*You set bounds they must not pass so that they never again cover the earth.*
10*You make springs gush forth in torrents; they make their way between the hills,*
11*giving drink to all the wild beasts; the wild asses slake their thirst.*
12*The birds of the sky dwell beside them and sing among the foliage.*
13*You water the mountains from Your lofts; the earth is sated from the fruit of Your work.*
14*You make the grass grow for the cattle, and herbage for man's labor that he may get food out of the earth—*
15*wine that cheers the hearts of men oil that makes the face shine, and bread that sustains man's life.*
16*The trees of the LORD drink their fill, the cedars of Lebanon, His own planting,*
17*where birds make their nests; the stork has her home in the junipers.*

9. These borders have never again been allowed to be changed permanently; neither would a repeat performance such as had occurred during the deluge be allowed again.

10. A further proof that G'd exercises His personal supervision over all His creations is seen when we observe that You have provided fountains, brooks, rivers etc. (to serve as life sustaining waters wherever there is life). The author views the presence of these waters as being subsequent to the presence of wildlife in their respective regions.

11/12. You direct the beasts towards available sources of water by having birds build their nests between the foliage *afa-im*, and their raising their voices to attract attention. The beasts are attracted to the life giving waters through hearing that the birds are at home in those narrow places. The wild beasts can slake their thirst, i.e. *yishbru phe-raim tzema-am*, once they hear the *of yitnu kolam*, the fowl raise their voices.

13. G'd extends Himself on behalf of man even to the extent of personally watering the mountains (murky matter) from His *aliyotav*, upper chambers, i.e. from waters originating in the celestial regions. (Taanit 9). Bereshit Rabbah describes this like perspiration from the "upper" waters. It does not result in a decrease of the water supply

ט גְּבוּל-שַׂמְתָּ בַל-יַעֲבֹרוּן לְכַסּוֹת הָאָרֶץ׃
י הַמְשַׁלֵּחַ מַעְיָנִים בַּנְּחָלִים בֵּין הָרִים יְהַלֵּכוּן׃
יא יַשְׁקוּ כָּל-חַיְתוֹ שָׂדָי יִשְׁבְּרוּ פְרָאִים צְמָאָם׃
יב עֲלֵיהֶם עוֹף-הַשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁכּוֹן מִבֵּין עֳפָאִים יִתְּנוּ-קוֹל׃
יג מַשְׁקֶה הָרִים מֵעֲלִיּוֹתָיו מִפְּרִי מַעֲשֶׂיךָ תִּשְׂבַּע הָאָרֶץ׃
יד מַצְמִיחַ חָצִיר לַבְּהֵמָה וְעֵשֶׂב לַעֲבֹדַת הָאָדָם לְהוֹצִיא
לֶחֶם מִן-הָאָרֶץ׃
טו וְיַיִן יְשַׂמַּח לְבַב-אֱנוֹשׁ לְהַצְהִיל פָּנִים מִשָּׁמֶן וְלֶחֶם
לְבַב-אֱנוֹשׁ יִסְעָד׃
טז יִשְׂבְּעוּ עֲצֵי יְהוָה אַרְזֵי לְבָנוֹן אֲשֶׁר נָטָע׃
יז אֲשֶׁר-שָׁם צִפֳּרִים יְקַנֵּנוּ חֲסִידָה בְּרוֹשִׁים בֵּיתָהּ׃

in the "upper" regions. The "perspiration" is hyperbole describing *peri ma-assecha*, the result of Your activities.

14. It is hard to understand why G'd would go to so much trouble to provide grass for the beasts and even herbs for man to work, when self regenerating grass is available which does not need seeding etc. However, G'd's purpose is to enable bread to become available. If in the process, the animals benefit, this is all right with G'd. Ben Sirah writes that G'd makes herbs grow from the earth – the pharmacist makes drugs from it. He teaches us that even the apparently primitive plants may have been imbued by G'd with superior undreamed of properties.

15. The reason G'd has made the production of bread (the staff of life) His main concern is that though wine gladdens the heart, – man's sustenance comes from bread.

16/17. Even the cedars of Lebanon (non fruitbearing) – receive from these *mayim ha-elyonim*, "upper" waters, as well as the birds which nest in those trees. They all benefit from what G'd intends for the benefit of mankind.

According to our sages who contrast the ready availability of a food supply for the animals, i.e. *chatzir*, with the fact that *ayssev*, herbs are NOT enough for man, this is to alert him to the fact that *la-avodat adam* that man must labour *lehotzi lechem* to produce bread from the earth. The Psalmist teaches us to view ourselves as constantly dependent on G'd's goodwill, His emanations. Had man

18The high mountains are for wild goats; the crags are a refuge for rock-badgers.
19He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows when to set.
20You bring on darkness and it is night, when all the beasts of the forests stir.
21The lions roar for prey, seeking their food from God.
22When the sun rises, they come home and couch in their dens.
23Man then goes out to his work, to his labor until the evening.
24How many are the things You have made, O LORD; You have made them all with wisdom; the earth is full of Your creations.
25There is the sea, vast and wide, with its creatures beyond number, living things, small and great.
26There go the ships, and Leviathan that You formed to sport with.
27All of them look to You to give them their food when it is due.
28Give it to them, they gather it up; open Your hand, they are well satisfied;

been given all his needs like the animals, he would not appreciate his Creator.

19. Similarly, it seems clear that the moon was created so we can sanctify it at appointed times, since for calendar purposes the sun and its regular dependable appearance – apart from its light giving properties is much more dependable.

20. However, the Psalmist DOES ask concerning why night is not possible without darkness. He answers that certain forest creatures only feel secure when it is dark, when they move about freely. We observe therefore, that G'd does ALL of this for the benefit of the animal kingdom.

21. G'd answers the cry of the lions for prey even at night.

22. By the time the sun rises, – they have already been answered, they steal away and rest in their lairs.

23. Why then does only man have to toil the whole day long? Are the animals really superior to man so that they enjoy such favoured treatment by G'd?

24. To argue that the very number of animals compared to man

יח הָרִים הַגְּבֹהִים לַיְעֵלִים סְלָעִים מַחְסֶה לַשְּׁפַנִּים:
יט עָשָׂה יָרֵחַ לְמוֹעֲדִים שֶׁמֶשׁ יָדַע מְבוֹאוֹ:
כ תָּשֶׁת-חֹשֶׁךְ וְיְהִי לָיְלָה בּוֹ-תִרְמֹשׂ כָּל-חַיְתוֹ-יָעַר:
כא הַכְּפִירִים שֹׁאֲגִים לַטָּרֶף וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מֵאֵל אָכְלָם:
כב תִּזְרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יֵאָסֵפוּן וְאֶל-מְעוֹנֹתָם יִרְבָּצוּן:
כג יֵצֵא אָדָם לְפָעֳלוֹ וְלַעֲבֹדָתוֹ עֲדֵי-עָרֶב:
כד מָה-רַבּוּ מַעֲשֶׂיךָ יְהוָה כֻּלָּם בְּחָכְמָה עָשִׂיתָ מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ קִנְיָנֶיךָ:
כה זֶה הַיָּם גָּדוֹל וּרְחַב יָדָיִם שָׁם-רֶמֶשׂ וְאֵין מִסְפָּר חַיּוֹת קְטַנּוֹת עִם-גְּדֹלוֹת:
כו שָׁם אֳנִיּוֹת יִהַלֵּכוּן לִוְיָתָן זֶה-יָצַרְתָּ לְשַׂחֶק-בּוֹ:
כז כֻּלָּם אֵילֶיךָ יְשַׂבֵּרוּן לָתֵת אָכְלָם בְּעִתּוֹ:
כח תִּתֵּן לָהֶם יִלְקֹטוּן תִּפְתַּח יָדְךָ יִשְׂבְּעוּן טוֹב:

entitles them to special consideration by G'd is not a good answer, since all the creatures were created by G'd's wisdom *chochmah*, alone, i.e. they did not even require an act of *assiyah*, completion of the creative process by G'd Himself such as was required in the creation of man. G'd's crowning achievement! The earth after all kept filling up spontaneously, – with Your permission – of course. (i.e. both nature and animals)

25/27. Further proof of the superiority of man is that even Leviathan, which You created for Your amusement, will ultimately become food for the *tzaddikim*, the righteous. Even the oceans, full as they are with teeming billions of creatures, serve primarily as a highway for ships, to enable man to travel from one continent to another! Why then do You seem to extend less help to man?

28. Why do all creatures of the sea seem to wait for You to give them their food as opposed to man, and as soon as You give it to them they are satisfied with the "good".

29. The Psalmist replies, i.e. the holy spirit speaking through the Psalmist replies "You are hiding Your face in order for them to be dismayed". Their spirit will then *tossef rucham*, become more active, they will acquire more insight, realize they might die and repent and prostrate themselves on the dust, (confessing their guilt).

29*hide Your face, they are terrified; take away their breath, they perish and turn again into dust;*
30*send back Your breath, they are created, and You renew the face of the earth.*
31*May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in His works!*
32*He looks at the earth and it trembles; He touches the mountains and they smoke.*
33*I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; all my life I will chant hymns to my God.*
34*May my prayer be pleasing to Him; I will rejoice in the LORD.*
35*May sinners disappear from the earth, and the wicked be no more.*
Bless the LORD, O my soul.
Hallelujah.

105 *Praise the LORD; call on His name; proclaim His deeds among the peoples.*

30. Their food supply is withheld – in a year of drought for instance, – and facing death they have returned to G'd. You will revive them like a new creation, i.e. and You will revive the face of the earth itself. The Psalmist paraphrases the words of Kiddushin 82, "I have never seen a lion carrying loads or a fox trading". They all receive their livelihood painlessly, effortlessly. If I do not, – it is only because I have sinned and forfeited my claim to *parnassah*, livelihood at the hands of G'd, directly.

31. The Honour of G'd would endure forever, and He could take pleasure in all His creatures.

32. Were this to come true already, – instead of earth trembling from its inadequacies each time You look at it, – it would have become refined. You would be able to touch the mountains and they would smoke (as at the revelation on Mount Sinai when G'd had descended on the mountain).

33. I make these observations of a general nature. Concerning myself personally, the Psalmist says "I will sing to G'd for having granted me life"; instead of being doomed as a premature baby to die immediately, he has not only been granted life in this world but owes thanks also for having acquired a share in the hereafter.

כט תַּסְתִּיר פָּנֶיךָ יִבָּהֵלוּן תֹּסֵף רוּחָם יִגְוָעוּן וְאֶל-עֲפָרָם
יְשׁוּבוּן:
ל תְּשַׁלַּח רוּחֲךָ יִבָּרֵאוּן וּתְחַדֵּשׁ פְּנֵי אֲדָמָה:
לא יְהִי כְבוֹד יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם יִשְׂמַח יְהוָה בְּמַעֲשָׂיו:
לב הַמַּבִּיט לָאָרֶץ וַתִּרְעָד יִגַּע בֶּהָרִים וְיֶעֱשָׁנוּ:
לג אָשִׁירָה לַיהוָה בְּחַיָּי אֲזַמְּרָה לֵאלֹהַי בְּעוֹדִי:
לד יֶעֱרַב עָלָיו שִׂיחִי אָנֹכִי אֶשְׂמַח בַּיהוָה:
לה יִתַּמּוּ חַטָּאִים מִן-הָאָרֶץ וּרְשָׁעִים עוֹד אֵינָם בָּרְכִי
נַפְשִׁי אֶת-יְהוָה הַלְלוּיָהּ:

קה

א הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה קִרְאוּ בִשְׁמוֹ הוֹדִיעוּ בָעַמִּים עֲלִילוֹתָיו:

Azamrah, I will sing praises to my Lord, while I am on this earth, i.e. *be-odi*.

34. As long as my speech and meditation are pleasing to Him, *alav*, this is all I need in order to rejoice in G'd, and for my soul to acquire the serenity and joy when I can continue talking to G'd.

35. It is possible that he wished himself personally that his departure from earth should be as close to the ultimate resurrection as is indicated in the statement about Rabbi Achai ben Yoshiyah.

He hoped not to taste the sadness associated with death. He could not ask this for Israel as a whole, due to the presence of the sinners. Therefore he prays *yitamu chata-im* let the sinners cease to be. They cannot be killed right away, else they would not have a chance to do *teshuvah*, repentance, in which case they would suffer in purgatory. The *chata-im*, the doers of evil, will be no more since their heart of stone will have been replaced by a heart of flesh.

He himself however, is ready to bless the 4 lettered name of G'd, having already experienced G'd's goodness. "You", i.e. the vast majority of Israel, *halle-lu "koh"*, praise the 2 lettered name of G'd, since you are not yet at the level where you can proclaim the defeat of evil=Satan=Amalek.

Psalm 105

1. The Psalmist calls on Israel to give thanks to the Lord, saying "you alone are fit, worthy to give thanks to Him". Do not however,

[2]*Sing praises to Him; speak of all His wondrous acts.*
[3]*Exult in His holy name; let all who seek the LORD rejoice.*
[4]*Turn to the LORD, to His might; seek His presence constantly.*
[5]*Remember the wonders He has done, His portents and the judgments He has pronounced,*
[6]*O offspring of Abraham, His servant, O descendants of Jacob, His chosen ones.*
[7]*He is the LORD our God; His judgments are throughout the earth.*
[8]*He is ever mindful of His covenant, the promise He gave for a thousand generations,*
[9]*that He made with Abraham, swore to Isaac,*

employ many adjectives, lest you be accused of having exhausted your thanks when you run out of adjectives! Merely proclaim His name, *kiru bishmo*!

Should you argue that it is GOOD to employ all these adjectives, seeing each adjective is an acknowledgment of an activity by G'd, i.e. *allilotav*, and thus G'd's actions will become known to the nations, even though there is no need to acquaint Israel with G'd's deeds, the Psalmist disagrees. He says that there is no need for this. He wishes the nations would appreciate this through the *hoda-ah*, proclamation which should register in their ears. They should respond to facts not to adjectives.

2. Our sages, in Megillah 14, (Rav Nachman), have said that *Hallel* is not recited on Purim although the redemption was of such a complete nature that it could be viewed as a resurrection of the nation from death. The reason is that the reading of the *Megillah*, story of Esther, is equivalent to the reciting of the *Hallel* hymn. In the Megillah we relate all G'd's accomplishments.

The Psalmist therefore recommends *shiru, zamru*, sing, sing praises, meditate, i.e. tell all His wondrous deeds.

3. You should seek your praise in His holy name, i.e. in the fact that His holy name is associated with you. Even if the benefit of this is not immediately evident to you while you are in exile, *yissmach lev*, the time will come when those who seek the Lord will rejoice.

3/4. Or, since there are few people who enjoy the privileges of both the present world and the hereafter, – the Psalmist suggests NOT to ask that G'd relate to you exclusively as *midat harachamim*, i.e. as Hashem, but rather *dirshu hashem ve-uzzo*, "seek out both the

ג שִׁירוּ-לוֹ זַמְּרוּ-לוֹ שִׂיחוּ בְּכָל-נִפְלְאוֹתָיו:
ד הִתְהַלְלוּ בְּשֵׁם קָדְשׁוֹ יִשְׂמַח לֵב מְבַקְשֵׁי יְהוָה:
ה דִּרְשׁוּ יְהוָה וְעֻזּוֹ בַּקְּשׁוּ פָנָיו תָּמִיד:
ו זִכְרוּ נִפְלְאֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה מֹפְתָיו וּמִשְׁפְּטֵי-פִיהוּ:
ז זֶרַע אַבְרָהָם עַבְדּוֹ בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב בְּחִירָיו:
ח הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ מִשְׁפָּטָיו:
ט זָכַר לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ דָּבָר צִוָּה לְאֶלֶף דּוֹר:
י אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת אֶת-אַבְרָהָם וּשְׁבוּעָתוֹ לְיִשְׂחָק:

merciful attribute of G'd as well as His attribute of strength, justice". In order to ensure that you will be at a level where you can always face Him *panav tamid*, it is necessary to be exposed to some *yissurim*, afflictions, and the character building strength derived from them. A measure of afflictions is the *panav*, the best guarantee that one remains aware that one is constantly in need of G'd's benevolent Presence. Should you be concerned that the afflictions may drive you to become disgruntled, and make you feel that G'd does not treat the pious in a deserving manner, the Psalmist suggests *bakshu fanav tamid*, concentrate in your prayers on the request to be granted help to remain loyal to Him at all times.

It was this that Rabbi Chaninah ben Dotha consoled his wife and himself with in his poverty. See our commentary on Proverbs 8,17. Rabbi Chaninah had seen evidence that G'd was very close to him, and had he wanted to he could have enjoyed all that this life has to offer. (compare Talmud Taanit 24/25)

5/6. Remembering all the miracles G'd has performed for the Jewish people since the Exodus, will make you confident of His ongoing Providential Supervision, *hashgachah*, all of which is proof that He considers the Jewish people the important part of the seed of Abraham, rather than Ishmael. The sons of Jacob are the ones He has selected. This proves that He considers the Jewish people the important part of the "seed".

7. Do not be concerned when you observe the gentile nations prosper in this life, while you are facing difficulties. The time will come when He will be our G'd throughout the world, and when His mercy will be extended ONLY to US. He will exercise justice over the whole earth, i.e. the gentile nations. *bechol ha-aretz mishpatav*!

8/9. Proof that Israel is the main reason the universe exists, is that

[10]and confirmed in a decree for Jacob, for Israel, as an eternal covenant,
[11]saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as your allotted heritage."
[12]They were then few in number, a mere handful, sojourning there,
[13]wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another.
[14]He allowed no one to oppress them; He reproved kings on their account,

He remembers His covenant with Jacob's descendants *le-olam*, for the sake of the universe. (the letter *lamed* means here "for the sake of").

What is it that He remembers? The word, i.e. the Torah, which He had sworn to give man after 1000 generations! He remembers that on account of Israel, He advanced the timetable for giving the Torah by 974 generations. At that time He gave the Torah to Israel in order to insure the survival of mankind, i.e. the survival of the universe. This was NOT on account of Ishmael (whose descendants refused the Torah) but on account of the oath to Abraham and Isaac.

10/11. Isaac had passed on this oath (promise) to Jacob as a statute. (not as a *mishpot*, a law based on logic). He told him I will give the land of Canaan to YOU, to make it a portion of your inheritance. Though Esau was Jacob's brother, – it was through Isaac's blessing to Jacob that he did NOT share in this inheritance.

It would be an everlasting covenant, – as long as Israel's descendants kept their part of the bargain. The reason that it was not enough to refer to the promise G'd had made to Abraham is, that G'd wanted it understood that Isaac who represented *din* the attribute of justice was a necessary part to this covenant. Unless the descendants would be deserving therefore, – the *le-olam* character of this promise, i.e. uninterrupted possession of the land of Israel would not remain operative.

12. In Genesis 15,13, at the *brit beyn habetarim*, the covenant between the pieces, Abraham had been informed about 2 distinct stages in the development preceding Israel's taking possession of the land of Canaan. Firstly, there would be *geyrut*, a period of being aliens in a country not their own as yet. Secondly, there would be a period when Abraham's descendants would suffer bondage and persecution. The first stage would occur while Abraham's descendants were still few in numbers, after Isaac had been born,

י וַיַּעֲמִידֶהָ לְיַעֲקֹב לְחֹק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִית עוֹלָם:
יא לֵאמֹר לְךָ אֶתֵּן אֶת-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן חֶבֶל נַחֲלַתְכֶם:
יב בִּהְיוֹתָם מְתֵי מִסְפָּר כִּמְעַט וְגָרִים בָּהּ:
יג וַיִּתְהַלְּכוּ מִגּוֹי אֶל-גּוֹי מִמַּמְלָכָה אֶל-עַם אַחֵר:
יד לֹא-הִנִּיחַ אָדָם לְעָשְׁקָם וַיּוֹכַח עֲלֵיהֶם מְלָכִים:

and the term *zera*, seed could be applied to Abraham's descendants.

Once they would become numerous, i.e. when their total would exceed the number 70, the period of bondage could be applied, i.e. the 400 years could commence.

The Psalmist asks that if the Lord loved the patriarchs all that much, why did they have to undergo so many trials and tribulations during their lives? Joseph is included in the term "patriarchs" for the purpose of this question. If Joseph had been guilty, why was he suddenly promoted to the office of viceroy of the greatest state on earth at that time? Therefore the Psalmist explains that as long as Abraham's descendants were few in number, G'd treated them relatively well, i.e. though they were strangers they were never slaves. In order NOT to commence the combined count of 400 years only AFTER Isaac had become an adult, G'd considered him a stranger even in Eretz Yisrael, his birthplace since the day he was born. Secondly, G'd did him a favour by considering *bah*, i.e. inside the land of Canaan also an area where his "alien" status applied. Although Isaac NEVER left the boundaries of the holy land, all the years of his life (180) are included in the combined alien/bondage period forecast to Abraham at the covenant of the pieces.

This is the meaning of A) *bihyotam metey misspaor kimat*, and B) *vegarim bah*, i.e. even while dwelling in it. Instead of accusing G'd of LACK of pity, G'd displayed tremendous consideration for the patriarchs and their offspring.

13. Even while they wandered from kingdom to kingdom, from nation to nation, G'd maintained His constant protective supervision. According to the laws of nature, the patriarchs could have been expected to fall victim to numerically superior forces, but such was not the case.

14. No one was allowed to molest them. Neither the Egyptian mob, (Genesis 12,12–14) nor Pharaoh; (Genesis 12,17), nor Avimelech, (Genesis 20,3) were allowed to harm Abraham. The same, of course, held true for Isaac's and Jacob's experiences.

15 *"Do not touch My anointed ones; do not harm My prophets."*
16 *He called down a famine on the land, destroyed every staff of bread.*
17 *He sent ahead of them a man, Joseph, sold into slavery.*
18 *His feet were subjected to fetters; an iron collar was put on his neck.*
19 *Until his prediction came true the decree of the LORD purged him.*

15. G'd had told the respective rulers specifically not to touch His anointed nor His prophets. Since our sages say that the nations had treated Abraham like a king, (compare Genesis 23,6), Abraham's wife as wife of a king, would therefore qualify for the title "queen". The word *meshichay* My anointed ones, would refer to Abraham and Sarah then. Since both had prophetic visions, they are also referred to as "My prophets".

Possibly, the reference is to G'd having appeared to Laban in a dream, enjoining him not to molest Jacob. (Genesis 31,24). Joseph had also enjoyed prophetic insights as a result of G'd being "with him". (Genesis 39,2, 39,21, 41,38).

16. Bereshit Rabbah, commenting on Genesis 41,55, when Pharaoh sent the Egyptians to Joseph to obtain their grain rations, states, that Joseph did not hand out any rations to the Egyptians until the latter had circumcised themselves. The stores of the local population had rotted, and only the stores laid in by Joseph had remained in prime condition. Pharaoh warned the people that if they did not obey Joseph, the stores kept by him might rot also.

17. Actually, this verse belongs before verse 16, since it refers to events that occurred 19 years earlier than the ones referred to in verse 16. We have explained that the famine in Egypt was the main purpose of G'd at the time. He had wanted that the *Shechinah* should precede Israel's descent into Egypt in order to form some counterweight against the *sar shel mitzrayim*, the celestial counterpart of Egypt. With the *Shechinah* in Egypt, Israel would not succumb so easily to the power of the *sar shel mitzrayim*.

It was necessary therefore, for Joseph to come down to Egypt first, and for him to enjoy the Divine Presence there. In order to weaken the power of the *sar shel mitzrayim*, all the grain under his domain had to rot, whereas all the grain under the care of Joseph had to remain in excellent condition. This was one of the ways in

טו אַל-תִּגְעוּ בִמְשִׁיחָי וְלִנְבִיאַי אַל-תָּרֵעוּ׃
טז וַיִּקְרָא רָעָב עַל-הָאָרֶץ כָּל-מַטֵּה-לֶחֶם שָׁבָר׃
יז שָׁלַח לִפְנֵיהֶם אִישׁ לְעֶבֶד נִמְכַּר יוֹסֵף׃
יח עִנּוּ בַכֶּבֶל רַגְלָיו בַּרְזֶל בָּאָה נַפְשׁוֹ׃
יט עַד-עֵת בֹּא-דְבָרוֹ אִמְרַת יְהוָה צְרָפָתְהוּ׃

which the Divine Presence was beneficial. The Israelites descending to Egypt, therefore were being fed only grain which had remained in good condition due to Joseph's MERIT, and they had no cause to thank the *sar shel mitzrayim* for their sustenance.

This is the reason Joseph was able later on to send word to his father (Genesis 49,9–11) that Jacob should not hesitate to come to Egypt, since he would not be provided for by Pharaoh, but by himself, his son. G'd therefore had sent Joseph to Egypt because He had already planned when the famine would strike Egypt.

18. Similarly, the Psalmist describes that Joseph came close to being guilty of the death penalty, his life was subject to the sword, – since he had been willing to be seduced by the wife of Potiphar. This is the meaning of "he entered the house to perform his work". (Genesis 39,11)

The Midrash Rabbah 87,7 explains that if his father's image had not flashed before him, he would not have been able to resist the temptation at that time. The death penalty he would have incurred for sleeping with a married woman was therefore converted into a prison term, i.e. *innu bakevel raglo*. The ten years in prison corresponded to the 10 drops of semen he had ejaculated through the tips of his fingers. (instead of through his male member). Compare the allusion to this in Genesis 49,24 and Midrash Hagadol on this verse.)

The irons of the chains substituted for the iron of the lethal sword by which he would have been executed according to this view. The Psalmist may hint at the inner struggle Joseph went through by referring to *raglo* his foot (sing.) instead of *raglav* his feet, i.e. that he had redeemed himself partially for entering the house by leaving voluntarily to escape the sin.

19. When the heavenly tribunal weighed Joseph's guilt, they had to take into consideration Joseph's words "also here I have not done anything – that they have put me in jail". (Genesis 40,15)

The word *eyt* in our verse may refer to Rosh Hashanah when everyone is judged in heaven. These words which Joseph had said to

[20]The king sent to have him freed; the ruler of nations released him.
[21]He made him the lord of his household, empowered him over all his possessions,
[22]to discipline his princes at will, to teach his elders wisdom.
[23]Then Israel came to Egypt; Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.
[24]He made His people very fruitful, more numerous than their foes.
[25]He changed their heart to hate His people, to plot against His servants.

the chief of the butlers, sounded like a implied complaint against how he had been treated by heaven. When G'd reviewed his file, – He ruled that Joseph's comment had been intended as a criticism of human jurisprudence, and had not been a complaint against G'd's justice. Joseph voiced an objection to having been put in jail for a crime he had not committed. *Imrat Hashem tzerafatu*, the word of G'd declared him as refined, pure. (Our sages in Rosh Hashanah say that Joseph was released from jail on Rosh Hashanah.)

20. Subsequently, also the *moshel amim*, ruler of the nations, i.e. Pharaoh released him. Had G'd not first decreed his release, it is hard to imagine that Pharaoh would not have investigated the reasons Joseph had been in prison in the first place.

21. Not only was Joseph freed, but he became ruler over all Pharaoh's belongings. Instead of rising through the ranks, he BEGAN by becoming ruler in Pharaoh's household.

22. This was designed *le-essor*, to restrain the power of *sarav*, Egypt's spiritual representative in the celestial regions. We have explained all this at the beginning of the book of Exodus. The *Shechinah*, Divine entourage, descended into Egypt with Joseph to counteract the negative influences prevailing there. Joseph made sure that instead of the Jews eating the bread of the Egyptians, – and becoming indebted to them, – the Egyptians instead would eat the bread of the Jews, i.e. the bread Joseph provided. By insisting on the Egyptians circumcising themselves, the power of the *sar shel mitzrayim*, was undermined further. This is what the Psalmist means when he speaks about *le-essor sarav benafsho*. Joseph's holy person had become the conduit to channel G'd's bounty to his family, and he had restrained the *tum-ah*, impurity of Egyptian culture infecting them indiscriminately. The reason the word *sarav*, its

כ שָׁלַח מֶלֶךְ וַיַּתִּירֵהוּ מֹשֵׁל עַמִּים וַיְפַתְּחֵהוּ׃
כא שָׂמוֹ אָדוֹן לְבֵיתוֹ וּמֹשֵׁל בְּכָל-קִנְיָנוֹ׃
כב לֶאְסֹר שָׂרָיו בְּנַפְשׁוֹ וּזְקֵנָיו יְחַכֵּם׃
כג וַיָּבֹא יִשְׂרָאֵל מִצְרָיִם וְיַעֲקֹב גָּר בְּאֶרֶץ-חָם׃
כד וַיֶּפֶר אֶת-עַמּוֹ מְאֹד וַיַּעַצְמֵהוּ מִצָּרָיו׃
כה הָפַךְ לִבָּם לִשְׂנֹא עַמּוֹ לְהִתְנַכֵּל בַּעֲבָדָיו׃

princes, is in the plural is because our sages taught that Egypt had 2 such celestial representatives named *rahav* and *uzzah* respectively. If one would be restrained, the other would carry on with similar tasks. (Based on a Midrash avkir, one of the *sarim* being one of the *nefilim* fallen angels, referred to in the book of Genesis 6,2 as the *beney ha-elohim*.) In our midrashic literature, the name *rahav* usually relates to the *sar shalom*, representative of the might of the MATERIAL universe. Due to Joseph's greatness, Torah study was introduced in Egypt, and our sages have a tradition that during all the years of exile in Egypt *lo passkah yeshivah*, there was never a total abandonment of Torah study. (i.e. the traditions available at that time) (compare Bereshit Rabbah 95,3 on Genesis 46,28) This was similar to when G'd had sent the king Yechonyah with part of the elite of the Jewish people into exile ahead of the destruction of the temple during the reign of Tzedekiah, to ensure that Torah would not be forgotten due to the destruction of the temple and Jewish independence all at the same time.

23. Having told us how G'd did Israel a favour by arranging for Joseph to come to Egypt ahead of them, the Psalmist continues that ONLY because of that "Israel CAME to Egypt", i.e. voluntarily, not in iron chains as had been planned originally.

One may ask what advantage accrued to the Jewish people from all this, seeing that the years Joseph had preceded Jacob's family's descent were NOT included in the count of the years of exile. The Psalmist answers that "Jacob sojourned in the land of Cham", i.e. the land of Canaan, Cham's son. The prophecy that Abraham's descendants would be strangers and slaves in a land not theirs, was applied to the years Isaac and Jacob lived PRIOR to Jacob's descent into Egypt.

24. G'd made Israel very fruitful – as distinct from their hosts the Egyptians. Instead of their bondage and hard labour weakening them and undermining their health, *va-ya-atzimehu mitzarav*, He made the people stronger as a result of their sufferings.

[26]He sent His servant Moses, and Aaron, whom He had chosen.
[27]They performed His signs among them, His wonders, against the land of Ham.
[28]He sent darkness; it was very dark; did they not defy His word?
[29]He turned their waters into blood and killed their fish.

25. He made the Egyptians hate the Jewish people and plot against His servants. Since Pharaoh decreed that also the Egyptian babies should be drowned (Exodus 1,22), this produced a backlash of hatred against the Jews. The idea, of course, had been that the potential saviour of the Jews should be drowned. (The Egyptians' horoscope indicated that the Jews' saviour would be born that day) (Sotah 12)

26. We had mentioned earlier (verse 1) that the entire range of miracles had been designed to broadcast G'd's mighty deeds amongst the nations of the world. It was necessary therefore to convince them that Moses and Aaron did not perform magic tricks, nor practiced optical illusions as the Egyptians had thought at the beginning. They had to be convinced that G'd supported Moses and Aaron because of their righteousness. Moses alone was capable of performing all the miracles unaided. Aaron was NOT NEEDED to assist him, i.e. *Aharon asher bachar bo*, Moses had chosen to have Aaron assist him, not because he NEEDED him.

Since Moses had said to G'd *shelach na beyad asher tischlach*, send the person whom You normally send, i.e. Aaron (Exodus 4,13), Moses had not wanted that his brother Aaron would appear to have been demoted from his erstwhile role of senior elder amongst the Jewish people.

27. Proof that Moses and Aaron did not initiate any of the plagues on their own, is our tradition that the first letters of each plague were inscribed on the staff of Moses in the sequence of *detzach adash be-achav* (as we recite this in the Haggadah on the Seder) (Shemot Rabbah 5,6)

The Egyptians realized that the miracles were of a higher order when the staff of Moses, as opposed to the serpent it had first turned into – swallowed the staffs of Pharaoh's magicians. (Exodus 7,10–12) No trace remained of the magicians' staffs, nor did they regain their former shape after the demonstration. G'd, of course, could have brought about the Exodus without any of the 10 plagues

כו שָׁלַח מֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ אַהֲרֹן אֲשֶׁר-בָּחַר בּוֹ׃
כז שָׂמוּ בָם דִּבְרֵי אֹתוֹתָיו וּמֹפְתִים בְּאֶרֶץ חָם׃
כח שָׁלַח חֹשֶׁךְ וַיַּחְשִׁךְ וְלֹא מָרוּ אֶת-דְּבָרָיו׃
כט הָפַךְ אֶת-מֵימֵיהֶם לְדָם וַיָּמֶת אֶת-דְּגָתָם׃

but He wanted to demonstrate His sovereignty in all parts of the earth.

28. The reason that the Psalmist omits mention of the plagues of *dever* and *shechin*, the cattle disease and the boils suffered by the people, is, that seeing that the plagues form the subject discussed by Israel and the nations, the former extolling G'd's miraculous powers, those two plagues would not impress those who had not suffered them personally as having been the direct result of G'd's power. They would simply be viewed as natural disasters. Only the people present who realized that none of the Israelites' cattle had died, nor any of the cattle which had been brought indoors, would be convinced that this was indeed something supernatural. Similar considerations apply to the plague of *shechin*, boils.

Still, the fact that the Psalmist does not list the plagues in the order in which they occurred, is noteworthy. Mention of the plague of darkness, i.e. a different darkness from that of night, a darkness emanating in Gehinom, purgatory, which FOLLOWED the darkness of night without meeting opposition by the laws of nature (i.e. the regular darkness) was to convince the Egyptians that this plague could have preceded the plague of blood. (compare Onkelos on Exodus 10,21.)

The Psalmist makes the point that the plagues were not NEEDED to achieve the result G'd had in mind. G'd could have either taken the Israelites out of Egypt while the latter remained unaware of it (during the darkness), or He could have done so against their will. They could have resisted.

Just as these forces (laws of nature) had not protested their appointed tasks during the 6 days of creation, i.e. *lo maru*, so they did not protest the use G'd made of them during these many days of the plague of darkness. G'd WANTED to subject the Egyptians to all the plagues inscribed on Moses' staff.

29. The Egyptians had NO excuse not to realize the miraculous nature of the plagues, since the very first one already demonstrated clearly that the blood was very real, as the fish in the Nile had all died.

30*Their land teemed with frogs, even the rooms of their king.*
31*Swarms of insects came at His command, lice, throughout their country.*
32*He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land.*
33*He struck their vines and fig trees, broke down the trees of their country.*
34*Locusts came at His command, grasshoppers without number.*
35*They devoured every green thing in the land; they consumed the produce of the soil.*
36*He struck down every first-born in the land, the first fruit of their vigor.*
37*He led Israel out with silver and gold; none among their tribes faltered.*
38*Egypt rejoiced when they left, for dread of Israel had fallen upon them.*

30. The fact that the frogs came from all over, not just from the river, plus the manner in which they invaded even the king's bedchamber, made it plain that the plague was a miracle by G'd. No doubt the Egyptians had tried to lock their doors etc. The frogs which kept coming were propelled by supernatural force.

31. The reason the Egyptians could not claim that the invasion of their built up areas by the wild beasts was a natural phenomenon was 1) their arrival at the precise moment Moses had predicted; 2) the fact that they arrived before the *kinnim*, insects had departed. Wild beasts normally shun insects, are afraid of being stung. If they ignored their instincts, this could only have been due to supernatural considerations.

32/33. Proof of the miraculous nature of the hail lay in the fire it contained, which started flames all over. Should one argue that these little flames could not have heated the atmosphere, the fact that even vines, figtrees etc. were broken proves otherwise. Since hail does not cause THAT kind of damage, it is clear that this was due to the fire inside the hailstones.

34. To the enquiry how it was that such strong fires left the wheat and the spelt unharmed, we must answer that this was in order to give the locust something to eat. Had things happened the

ל שָׁרַץ אַרְצָם צְפַרְדְּעִים בְּחַדְרֵי מַלְכֵיהֶם:
לא אָמַר וַיָּבֹא עָרֹב כִּנִּים בְּכָל-גְּבוּלָם:
לב נָתַן גִּשְׁמֵיהֶם בָּרָד אֵשׁ לֶהָבוֹת בְּאַרְצָם:
לג וַיַּךְ גַּפְנָם וּתְאֵנָתָם וַיְשַׁבֵּר עֵץ גְּבוּלָם:
לד אָמַר וַיָּבֹא אַרְבֶּה וְיֶלֶק וְאֵין מִסְפָּר:
לה וַיֹּאכַל כָּל-עֵשֶׂב בְּאַרְצָם וַיֹּאכַל פְּרִי אַדְמָתָם:
לו וַיַּךְ כָּל-בְּכוֹר בְּאַרְצָם רֵאשִׁית לְכָל-אוֹנָם:
לז וַיּוֹצִיאֵם בְּכֶסֶף וְזָהָב וְאֵין בִּשְׁבָטָיו כּוֹשֵׁל:
לח שָׂמַח מִצְרַיִם בְּצֵאתָם כִּי-נָפַל פַּחְדָּם עֲלֵיהֶם:

natural way, the wheat and spelt would have been burned by the fire inside the hailstones also.

35. The miraculous nature of the locust could be seen in the way they consumed only what was inside the boundaries of Egypt. They did not touch anything which bordered on Egypt.

36. He struck all the first born that happened to be in their land at the time, even if not of Egyptian origin, even if not natural born, i.e. born by Caesarean section. If a bachelor had 10 children from 10 different women they were all slain.

37. Another miracle G'd performed at the time was, that the very people who were grief stricken and busy burying their dead, gave freely of their money and valuables to the people who were the cause of the death of their children. This is the meaning of *vayotziem bechessef vezahav*, He took them out with silver and gold. The Israelites did not hesitate to request this from the Egyptians at the time. This was also what eventually caused the Egyptians to take heart and pursue the Israelites as soon as the Israelites had overstayed the 3 days leave of absence they had been requesting. *Ve-eyn bishvatav koshel*, They did not worry that accepting the silver would induce pursuit by the Egyptians after 3 days.

Or, – though none of the Israelites' tribes were so poor that they NEEDED these trinkets, they asked for them to fulfil G'd's commandment through Moses. (Exodus 11,2)

38. Even the celestial representative of Egypt was happy at the Israelites' departure at the time, since he thought that if Israel were to remain in Egypt it might cause the death of ALL the Egyptians. (Exodus 12,33) Only when he saw that Israel was still afraid of the

39*He spread a cloud for a cover, and fire to light up the night.*
40*They asked and He brought them quail, and satisfied them with food from heaven.*
41*He opened a rock so that water gushed forth; it flowed as a stream in the parched land.*
42*Mindful of His sacred promise to His servant Abraham,*
43*He led His people out in gladness, His chosen ones with joyous song.*
44*He gave them the lands of nations; they inherited the wealth of peoples,*
45*that they might keep His laws and observe His teachings.*
Hallelujah.

Egyptians at the sea of reeds, did the *sar shel mitzrayim* regain his aggressive posture.

39. In response to the fear Israel displayed, G'd provided the pillar of cloud as protective curtain by day, and the pillar of fire as protective shield by night. (Exodus 14, 19–20) (Yalkut Shimoni 233) The light was for Israel, – Egypt remained in darkness all night long.

40. G'd treated Israel like angels, giving them heavenly food, i.e. the Manna. This food normally does not supply satisfaction for the body. Not only that but He sent them quail, i.e. food for the body, normally satisfying which did however NOT satisfy them, on the previous evening already. (On the previous evening it said "to eat" Exodus 16,8, whereas when the Manna fell, it says *lasova*, to provide satisfaction). All this demonstrated that the level of the Israelites was supra natural at the time, else food designed for the body would have satisfied them.

41. Also their water supply was not of the normal kind, natural. The water flowed slowly out of the rock, i.e. it oozed, which under normal circumstances suggests that it is about to cease flowing altogether. Not so in the case of the well supplying the Israelites. It kept getting stronger till it flowed river like through dry places i.e. *batziyot nahar*. This proved the spiritual properties of the water.

42. Shemot Rabbah 23,5 ascribes Moses' ability to sing the *shirat hayam*, the song of thanksgiving for the deliverance of Israel at the sea to the faith displayed by Abraham at the *brit beyn habetarim*, the covenant between the pieces. (Genesis 15,6) The Midrash bases

לט פָּרַשׂ עָנָן לְמָסָךְ וְאֵשׁ לְהָאִיר לָיְלָה׃
מ שָׁאַל וַיָּבֵא שְׂלָו וְלֶחֶם שָׁמַיִם יַשְׂבִּיעֵם׃
מא פָּתַח צוּר וַיָּזוּבוּ מָיִם הָלְכוּ בַצִּיּוֹת נָהָר׃
מב כִּי זָכַר אֶת-דְּבַר קָדְשׁוֹ אֶת-אַבְרָהָם עַבְדּוֹ׃
מג וַיּוֹצֵא עַמּוֹ בְשָׂשׂוֹן בְּרִנָּה אֶת-בְּחִירָיו׃
מד וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם אַרְצוֹת גּוֹיִם וַעֲמַל לְאֻמִּים יִירָשׁוּ׃
מה בַּעֲבוּר יִשְׁמְרוּ חֻקָּיו וְתוֹרֹתָיו יִנְצֹרוּ הַלְלוּיָהּ׃

itself on *havey tashuri merosh amanhah*, the word *merosh* referring to the original (*reyshit*) person who had displayed faith, i.e. Abraham. (compare Song of Songs 4,9)

By remembering his servant Abraham and his faith, the redemption became a joyful experience resulting in song. The letter *vav* in front of *vayotzi* instead of simply *hotzi*, may hint at the fact that he did not only take out Israel, but also the army of angels. The Midrash quotes the angels as having wanted to be the first ones to sing *shirah*, but G'd restrained them until Israel had sung first. This is what is meant in Psalms 68,26, "the singers go before, the minstrels follow behind"; i.e. G'd allowed His chosen people to sing first.

44. It is noteworthy that the Psalmist uses the term *matanah*, gift when he talks about *aratzot*, but switches to *yerushah* inheritance, when referring to *le-umim*, what the nations have acquired laboriously. A gift is something of transient character, whereas an inheritance is something acquired permanently. If Israel does not conduct itself properly, the land is only a gift to them, may be given to strangers. Israel having extolled the mighty deeds of the Lord might argue during the terrible exile that this had all been in vain, seeing that their land has been given to strangers.

45. The Psalmist tells them not to be surprised, since the condition had been *yishmeru chukav*, that they would observe His statutes etc. Since Israel did not keep its part of the bargain, their heritage was given to aliens. However, this should not be cause for despair. *Hallelu –y-a-h*, the 2 lettered name of G'd is the guarantee that the redemption will come, since the 4 lettered name of G'd can be joined only after the final and utter defeat of Amalek. (compare Exodus 17,16). Praise the Lord – in view of the promise implied in this line for eventual redemption.

106 *Hallelujah.*
Praise the LORD for He is good; His steadfast love is eternal.
2Who can tell the mighty acts of the LORD, proclaim all His praises?
3Happy are those who act justly, who do right at all times.
4Be mindful of me, O LORD, when You favor Your people; take note of me when You deliver them,

Psalm 106

1. The Talmud in Menachot 29, on Genesis 2,4 and Isaiah 26,6 "trust in the Lord forever – for in G'd there is everlasting strength", understands this verse as meaning that G'd created the universe with two letters of His name. He created the heavens with the letter *yud* and the earth with the letter *heh*. The meaning of the verse is then that He became the rock of the universe by employing His name *yud-heh*.

The common denominator between the two worlds is that we are asked to praise G'd because of the existence of these two worlds. We have to give thanks *hodu*, only for the continued existence of OUR planet, since it requires *chassdo*, His loving kindness to enable it to endure. The continued existence of the heavens does NOT require an act of G'd's kindness.

Since the evil urge does not operate in the celestial regions – their existence is not endangered. Our THANKS therefore is directed not at G'd the Creator, i.e. *yud-heh*, but at *Hashem* i.e. the 4 lettered name, the attribute of mercy.

When the Psalmist says (89,3) "the world is built on *chessed*, loving kindness", – the reference is only to our "lower" world.

2. The reason we do not elaborate is *mi yemallel gevurot Hashem*, who could possibly enumerate all the mighty acts of G'd, and who could possibly recount all the praises He is entitled to?

3. The reason the Psalmist describes the *shomrey mishpat*, those who observe justice in the plural whereas he describes the *osseh tzedakah* performer of righteousness in the singular, may be that justice is normally administered by a court, i.e. several judges and litigants, whereas *tzedakah*, charity, righteousness is best performed singly, discreetly.

If the Psalmist had referred to two completely separate matters, the word "performs charity" would have had to be linked by a conjunctive letter *vav* in front of the word *osseh*, does, performs.

קו א הַלְלוּיָהּ הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי-טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
ב מִי יְמַלֵּל גְּבוּרוֹת יְהוָה יַשְׁמִיעַ כָּל-תְּהִלָּתוֹ׃
ג אַשְׁרֵי שֹׁמְרֵי מִשְׁפָּט עֹשֵׂה צְדָקָה בְכָל-עֵת׃
ד זָכְרֵנִי יְהוָה בִּרְצוֹן עַמֶּךָ פָּקְדֵנִי בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ׃

Besides, how is it possible to perform charity all the time, i.e. *bechol ayt*? It is clear therefore, that the "charity" the Psalmist refers to is the tempering of *mishpat*, justice with *tzedakah*, mercy.

The words *shomrey mishpat* could also mean "remembering expectantly, such as in Genesis 37,11, where it says of Jacob "he watched for the matter expectantly". A similar meaning of the word *shomer* is found in Isaiah 26,2 *shomer emunim*, faithful, full of expectancy.

Rabbi Eleazar son of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai used to wait for the *yissurim* afflictions so that he would be sure to receive any retribution due him for his mistakes in this life rather than after his death. The Psalmist may be saying "hail to those people who await *mishpat* i.e. their retribution in this life".

Not everyone is on a level when the afflictions he suffers also protect the rest of his generation from G'd's anger. It follows that those people who receive these *yissurim* are the recipients of a Divine act of *tzedakah* for their contemporaries. G'd then is seen as performing *tzedakah* at all times. The *tzaddik* himself also receives a reward for the very period during which he EXPECTS these *yissurim*, not only when he actually endures them lovingly. Psalms 25,17 says "troubles have enlarged my heart", i.e. I have not become disgusted with my troubles, on the contrary. David asks G'd to remove those feelings from him which would make him loathe his afflictions.

4. Nonetheless, the Psalmist does not wish to cite his merits, lest his ledger be opened by G'd; he prefers to be included as part of the community he lives in, as we have learned in Berachot 30. "A person should include himself with the fate of the community". The Shunamit, in Kings II 4,13, did not want to be given special consideration and thus come to G'd's attention, but preferred to share the lot of the people in her village.

Yalkut Shimoni 864, quotes David as asking G'd to remember him when he would save the Jewish people through Mordechai. G'd promised that He would remember David at that time. This is why the reference to Mordechai in Megillat Esther commences with the words *ish Yehudi*, i.e. a man from the tribe of Yehudah, although Mordechai was a member of the tribe of Benjamin. We need to

5that I may enjoy the prosperity of Your chosen ones, share the joy of Your nation, glory in Your very own people.
6We have sinned like our forefathers; we have gone astray, done evil.
7Our forefathers in Egypt did not perceive Your wonders; they did not remember Your abundant love, but rebelled at the sea, at the Sea of Reeds.

understand what precisely was David's relationship to Mordechai. Besides, the plain meaning of Esther 2,5, clearly refers the word *Yehudi* to Mordechai, not to David!

Midrash Chazit explains that the reason David did not kill Shimi ben Geyrah, who had cursed Him, but left this to his son Solomon (Kings I, 2,8–9) was because he foresaw that Shimi would become the ancestor of Mordechai. David spared Shimi's life till the latter was very old, so that he was already very old and had fathered all the children he could, from whom Mordechai might eventually be descended close to 1000 years later. Therefore, David, i.e. a man from Yehudah had a share in Mordechai though the latter was *ish yemini*, a man from the tribe of Benjamin. He was entitled therefore to ask G'd to be remembered at a time when G'd would bring the *yeshuah*, salvation.

5. At that time he hopes to personally make the acquaintance of *bechirecha*, Your chosen ones, i.e. the patriarchs who will then have been resurrected. ("on the soil that G'd has sworn to your forefathers to give TO THEM" Deut. 11,9)

David describes that at that time when the third temple will be built he can share the true joy of Your people. At the dedication of the second temple, those who had remembered the splendour of the first temple cried, since they realized how inferior the second temple was to the first.

6. How can one generation sin simultaneously with another generation, i.e. *chatanu im avoteynu*? Besides, why is the Psalmist including the two or more generations only for the type of sin described as *chatanu*, not for *he-evvinu, hirshanu*? Also, instead of *hirshanu*, we would have expected *pashanu*, for we have sinned rebelliously? *Avon* is usually paired with *pesha*?

To understand the Psalmist, let us examine the classic formula of our *viduy* confession which our sages instituted. We begin by saying "but our forefathers as well as ourselves have sinned", *chatanu*. Does it not sound strange that in the act of confessing we are trying to

ז לְרָאוֹת בְּטוּבַת בְּחִירֶיךָ לִשְׂמֹחַ בְּשִׂמְחַת גּוֹיֶךָ
לְהִתְהַלֵּל עִם-נַחֲלָתֶךָ׃
ח חָטָאנוּ עִם-אֲבֹתֵינוּ הֶעֱוִינוּ הִרְשָׁעְנוּ׃
ט אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם לֹא-הִשְׂכִּילוּ נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ לֹא זָכְרוּ
אֶת-רֹב חֲסָדֶיךָ וַיַּמְרוּ עַל-יָם בְּיַם-סוּף׃

cast blame on our ancestors by accusing THEM of having been sinful? Are we trying to excuse our own shortcomings by pointing the finger at our mentors?

When we understand the teachings about soul migration as taught by Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, the matter becomes clear. The idea is that if we find ourselves having sinned, this is proof that we have already sinned in a previous incarnation, another life, and have been reincarnated only in order to make up for sins committed in a previous life. In other words, we are confessing OUR sins in both the present and the past life we have lived on this earth. This thought is expressed even more clearly by the Psalmist.

We confess that we who live in this dreadful exile have sinned, but even when our souls were part of the bodies of our ancestors, we had sinned already. It is not surprising therefore that we sin again, i.e. *he-evinu*, – since the commission of sinful acts brings other sinful acts in their wake, *aveyrah goreret aveyrah*.

The Psalmist has Israel say that our present sins should be no cause to delay our redemption, since our sins are due to a history of having been sinful. The cause of our present sins lies in a previous incarnation when we had been evil. *he-evinu*, we are wicked, *hirshanu*, because we had previously acted wickedly.

7. Our appeal is based on Your having brought redemption to our forefathers, who though they experienced all the miracles You have performed for them in Egypt and at the sea of reeds, did not appreciate Your kindness, but mocked and rebelled. (Compare Exodus 14,11) On the other hand we, who have NOT witnessed all these miracles DO appreciate and give thanks to You. (According to some, i.e. *Metargem* the Jews even complained that if G'd had dried the waters of the sea, why had He not dried out the mud on the sea bed, a relatively minor effort?) (compare Midrash Hagadol Shemot 14,21)

G'd told them that they deserved to die, but that He would save them for the sake of His name which they bore. Immediately, he dried out the mud.

8Yet He saved them, as befits His name, to make known His might.
9He sent His blast against the Sea of Reeds; it became dry; He led them through the deep as through a wilderness.
10He delivered them from the foe, redeemed them from the enemy.
11Water covered their adversaries; not one of them was left.
12Then they believed His promise, and sang His praises.
13But they soon forgot His deeds; they would not wait to learn His plan.

8. Despite this rebellious behaviour of the Jews at the sea, G'd brought the salvation to the Jewish people for the sake of His name. (Exodus 9,16) When the Psalmist says *lehodia gevurato*, instead of *u-lehodia gevurato* AND to make public His mighty deeds, he indicates that the generation which DID see the *yeshuah*, salvation, did not appreciate it. By telling about G'd's greatness in future generations, – G'd justified the redemption of an unworthy generation. Since OUR generation displays MORE faith, surely we are entitled to redemption for the sake of His name no less than the generation of the Exodus.

9. In case someone would point to the statement in Exodus 14,31 "the Israelites believed in G'd and Moses His servant" as proof that Israel did have faith, and that G'd saved them through the merit of their faith, the fact remains they do not deserve credit for THAT faith, as it developed AFTER they had seen the death of their adversaries. The Psalmist therefore states that G'd had felt impelled to rebuke the sea itself, i.e. the bed of the sea, not only the waters. In this way the Israelites had been able to march through the depth of the sea as if it had been a desert.

10. Concerning their complaint "are there not enough graves in Egypt that you have taken us out of Egypt to die in the desert?" (Exodus 14,11), when they saw Pharaoh and the *sar shel mitzrayim* pursue them, "He saved them from the hands of the hater", (the celestial representative of Egypt) and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. It is interesting that the word for "travelling" i.e. *nosseyah* is in the singular, referring evidently to the *sar shel mitzrayim*.

Similarly, Exodus 14,30, "He saved Israel that day from the hand of

ח וַיּוֹשִׁיעֵם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ לְהוֹדִיעַ אֶת-גְּבוּרָתוֹ׃
ט וַיִּגְעַר בְּיַם-סוּף וַיֶּחֱרָב וַיּוֹלִיכֵם בַּתְּהֹמוֹת כַּמִּדְבָּר׃
י וַיּוֹשִׁיעֵם מִיַּד שׂוֹנֵא וַיִּגְאָלֵם מִיַּד אוֹיֵב׃
יא וַיְכַסּוּ-מַיִם צָרֵיהֶם אֶחָד מֵהֶם לֹא נוֹתָר׃
יב וַיַּאֲמִינוּ בִּדְבָרָיו יָשִׁירוּ תְּהִלָּתוֹ׃
יג מִהֲרוּ שָׁכְחוּ מַעֲשָׂיו לֹא-חִכּוּ לַעֲצָתוֹ׃

Egypt and Israel saw Egypt dead", i.e. "dead" in the singular. This refers to the *sar shel mitzrayim*, Egypt's celestial representative. Afterwards, *vayigalem* He redeemed them from Pharaoh who had said "I will pursue etc." (Exodus 15,9)

11. Not only this, but not a single one of their oppressors was left. However, of those described as "enemy and hater", one was left, i.e. the enemy, Pharaoh himself. (Da-at zekeynim)

12. THEN they believed in His word and sang His praise. This counted as a merit, since Israel could have interpreted G'd's actions as punishment for Pharaoh who had refused to acknowledge the existence and authority of G'd, rather than as an act of salvation for the sake of Israel. However, when they saw that of all the Egyptians ONLY Pharaoh had survived, they realized that G'd had acted primarily on behalf of Israel. G'd had wanted to protect the honour of Israel much more than His own, else Pharaoh should have been the FIRST Egyptian victim. This is why Israel sang the *shirah*, song of thanksgiving.

At any rate, our forefathers did not understand, and forgot His deeds only to rebel etc. In spite of all this, You helped them, had mercy on them regardless of all their sins. Therefore, the Psalmist says, we who are better in this respect, should be able to count on Your help.

13. On top of all this, our ancestors forgot His deeds, their faith even when they finally displayed it was of short duration. They could not even wait out the full 40 days of Moses' absence before they made a golden calf. They induced lust in themselves. (Numbers 11,4), as will be explained.

14. These are the 2 lusts in the desert, one for recently forbidden kinds of incest, the other for meat. This despite the fact that G'd had provided the Manna. On the other hand, all WE ask for is to be helped from our enemies and to be offered a chance to give thanks

14They were seized with craving in the wilderness, and
put God to the test in the wasteland.
15He gave them what they asked for, then made them
waste away.
16There was envy of Moses in the camp, and of Aaron,
the holy one of the LORD.
17The earth opened up and swallowed Dathan, closed
over the party of Abiram.
18A fire blazed among their party, a flame that
consumed the wicked.
19They made a calf at Horeb and bowed down to a
molten image.
20They exchanged their glory for the image of a bull that
feeds on grass.
21They forgot God who saved them, who performed great
deeds in Egypt,

to Your holy name. They (our ancestors) tested G'd by questioning His ability to provide for them in a wasteland.

15. He granted them ONE of their requests, i.e. the request they had actually voiced, their desire for meat. He did not permit their relatives as marriage partners, since they had not even dared to ask for this aloud. After they had consumed the meat, he sent consumption to their souls so that the meat DID NOT satisfy them and sustain them. They experienced the reverse of what they had hoped for. However, they did not heed the lesson.

16. They were jealous of Moses' and Aaron's position in the camp. This sin could not even be excused as being due to greed or lust as had been the previous one. Even if Korach felt that he had some grievance, why would he be able to assemble "the whole congregation"? (Numbers 16,19)

The reason the Psalmist uses the word *bamachaneh*, in the camp, is to paraphrase the fact that the entire people were involved in this rebellion against Aaron the holy one, the priest. Since the people were neither Levites nor priests, they should not have taken a position at all in Korach's uprising.

17. Had G'd not had pity on them, and the earth swallowed Korach etc., not all of Israel, and the congregation of rebels had been consumed by fire, i.e. G'd had punished only the actively guilty, they would have all been killed.

19. The way they repaid Moses for having interceded on their

יד וַיִּתְאַוּוּ תַאֲוָה בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיְנַסּוּ-אֵל בִּישִׁימוֹן:
טו וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם שְׁאֵלָתָם וַיְשַׁלַּח רָזוֹן בְּנַפְשָׁם:
טז וַיְקַנְאוּ לְמֹשֶׁה בַּמַּחֲנֶה לְאַהֲרֹן קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה:
יז תִּפְתַּח-אֶרֶץ וַתִּבְלַע דָּתָן וַתְּכַס עַל-עֲדַת אֲבִירָם:
יח וַתִּבְעַר-אֵשׁ בַּעֲדָתָם לֶהָבָה תְּלַהֵט רְשָׁעִים:
יט יַעֲשׂוּ-עֵגֶל בְּחֹרֵב וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְמַסֵּכָה:
כ וַיָּמִירוּ אֶת-כְּבוֹדָם בְּתַבְנִית שׁוֹר אֹכֵל עֵשֶׂב:
כא שָׁכְחוּ אֵל מוֹשִׁיעָם עֹשֶׂה גְדֹלוֹת בְּמִצְרָיִם:

behalf and saved their lives after the episode of the golden calf, was to be jealous of Moses' position of leadership. These people who had constructed a golden calf at the very site where they had witnessed the revelation and had received the 10 commandments, would have been killed by G'd had Moses not pleaded with G'd for their very lives. The reason that the construction of the golden calf is mentioned by the Psalmist only now, (not in chronological order) is that Psalmist wishes that Israel had been guilty of nothing more serious than the golden calf. If THAT would have been the last of their sins, – he would have concluded that they had learned from their error of having bowed down to something useless, merely "a golden image", obviously incredibly inferior to their experience of witnessing the living G'd at Mount Sinai. Unfortunately, even that episode had not resulted in absolute repentance and faith in G'd.

20. How could people whose food was heavenly Manna prostrate themselves before the image of a grass eating ox?

21. Even if we were to say that the golden calf was not an object of worship, but merely a symbol of the zodiac sign of the ox which they saw as an intermediary between themselves and G'd, – did they really forget the G'd who had PERSONALLY saved them from the Egyptians, performed the tremendous miracles so recently at the sea? (without the aid of intermediaries)

He did so even in a land such as Egypt which was full of impurity, where it was not even reasonable to expect G'd to descend into?! Our sages compare G'd's descent into Egypt to rescue the Jewish people to a priest who enters the cemetery to collect his *terumah* his tithe.

22. Even if Israel had thought that Moses had performed all these miracles through superior magic, and that G'd had not had a hand in

22*wondrous deeds in the land of Ham, awesone deeds at the Sea of Reeds.*
23*He would have destroyed them had not Moses His chosen one confronted Him in the breach to avert His destructive wrath.*
24*They rejected the desirable land, and put no faith in His promise.*
25*They grumbled in their tents and disobeyed the LORD.*
26*So He raised His hand in oath to make them fall in the wilderness,*
27*to disperse their offspring among the nations and scatter them through the lands.*

this at all, this would be a most unreasonable assumption, seeing that all this had occurred in the land of Cham, the home of 90% of the world's magic. If even the Egyptian magicians had admitted that they could not cope with the relatively insignificant plague of *kinnim*, lice, that this was a manifestation of "the finger of G'd", (Exodus 8,15), then certainly the subsequent miracles would have had to be acts of G'd rather than any acts of magic or make believe. Even theologians, such as Yitro, had acknowledged the hand of G'd when they merely heard of these miracles.

23. Therefore, from a legal point of view, Israel had been guilty of death, and G'd had said that He was going to destroy them had Moses not stood in the breach. The Psalmist employs the words *vayomer lehashmidam*, instead of an expression such as *vayoel lehashmidom*, He agreed to destroy them, to indicate that G'd had intended to entrust that task to an angel, an intermediary. Intermediaries do not distinguish between the individually guilty and the individually innocent, but act indiscriminately within the framework of their assignment. Had Moses not intervened, G'd would not have restricted punishment to the actively guilty.

Moses had been given an opening by G'd when He had said – after telling Moses "go on down" –, (Exodus 3,7) *ve-attah hanicha li* and now let Me be. (Exodus 32,10) The Talmud Berachot 32 describes Moses as if physically attempting to restrain G'd, and G'd replying "now let me be"!

veyichar appi, let Me be angry, would be a reference to one of G'd's destructive agents. (see our commentary on Parshat Ki Tissa)

Moses then challenged G'd saying "why do You withdraw and hand over to an intermediary – the people whom You have PERSONALLY taken out of Egypt"?

כב נִפְלָאוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ חָם נוֹרָאוֹת עַל-יַם-סוּף:
כג וַיֹּאמֶר לְהַשְׁמִידָם לוּלֵי מֹשֶׁה בְחִירוֹ עָמַד בַּפֶּרֶץ
לְפָנָיו לְהָשִׁיב חֲמָתוֹ מֵהַשְׁחִית:
כד וַיִּמְאֲסוּ בְּאֶרֶץ חֶמְדָּה לֹא-הֶאֱמִינוּ לִדְבָרוֹ:
כה וַיֵּרָגְנוּ בְאָהֳלֵיהֶם לֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה:
כו וַיִּשָּׂא יָדוֹ לָהֶם לְהַפִּיל אוֹתָם בַּמִּדְבָּר:
כז וּלְהַפִּיל זַרְעָם בַּגּוֹיִם וּלְזָרוֹתָם בָּאֲרָצוֹת:

At any rate, instead of begrudging Moses his authority, the people should have been grateful for the way Moses had used his authority as a leader.

24. Having despised and belittled Moses, whose accomplishments they had witnessed, it is not surprising that they despised the lovely land (*eretz yisrael*) and did not believe Moses concerning its conquest. What the Psalmist is wishing is that Israel's ONLY sin should have been not to believe Moses concerning the quality of the land flowing with milk and honey.

25. Once the spies were groaning in their tents, expressing compassion for their wives who would be raped by the Canaanites and their daughters who would be equally mistreated and their sons who would be killed, this infected all the tents of the entire camp. (Yalkut Shimoni 805)

But their even greater sin was that they doubted G'd's ability to help them. Seeing this was the 9th day of Av, the time would come when they would have REASON to weep on that night, – for the destruction of 2 temples. Had they listened carefully to the first of the 10 commandments, they would never have experienced exile. Having heard G'd say directly from Heaven "I have taken you out of Egypt" should have stilled any fears about G'd's abilities once and for all.

26–27. At that time the death of the generation of the Exodus in the desert was decreed, as well as 2 kinds of exile in the future. The *vayivku ha-am balaylah ha-hu* (Numbers 14,1) caused these decrees. (Talmud Taanit 29) This is derived from the apparently unnecessary words "during the night". It would have sufficed to say "the people cried". Similarly, since G'd repeated *ad anah* how long, we know it to be a reference to repeated occurrences, i.e. two destructions of the temples. G'd swore "You have caused Me to say twice *ad anah*, I will cause you to say *ad anah* 4 times". (Bamidbar Rabbah 16,22)

28*They attached themselves to Baal Peor, ate sacrifices offered to the dead.*
29*They provoked anger by their deeds, and a plague broke out among them.*
30*Phinehas stepped forth and intervened, and the plague ceased.*
31*It was reckoned to his merit for all generations, to eternity.*
32*They provoked wrath at the waters of Meribah and Moses suffered on their account,*
33*because they rebelled against Him and he spoke rashly.*

28. Having despised the holy land, the Israelites attached themselves to impurity by falling victim to seduction at Baal Peor. (Numbers 25,3) Just as *tzemidim*, bracelets are worn loosely so that they do not hurt the flesh of the wearer, so initially, the attachment *tzemidah* of the Israelites to Baal Peor was very peripheral. In contrast, when one cleaves to G'd, i.e. *ve-attem ha-devaykim bashem*, you cleave to the Lord (Deut. 4,4) such cleavage is very close. Once the people ate from the *zivchey meytim* however, they immediately caused an outburst of G'd's anger. (Midrash Hagadol on Numbers 25,5)

29. Here the Psalmist refers to Zimri's action. Until there had been cohabitation with the Moabites and Midianites, the pestilence had been mild, and Moses had been instructed to kill the guilty by taking the leaders of the people with him. (Numbers 25,4–5)

But once Zimri, a LEADER was cohabiting with a Midianite princess in open defiance of Moses, – G'd's plague smote the people wholesale – until Pinchas intervened.

30. *va-yefallel*, he exacted criminal justice, similar to *venatan bifilim* (Exodus 21,22.) He taught in Moses' presence that it is permissible to kill those who are in the act of cohabiting with gentiles, and that when a public desecration of the Lord's name is at stake, one need not concern oneself with the proprieties, i.e. according honour to one's seniors rather than putting a stop to such desecration of the Lord's name.

Moses at the time felt handicapped. (his wife being of Midianite origin)

The plague was arrested.

31. Although Pinchas could have been arraigned for having acted high handedly, just as Samuel was guilty of high handedly pronouncing a religious ruling without deference to the local religious

כח וַיִּצָּמְדוּ לְבַעַל פְּעוֹר וַיֹּאכְלוּ זִבְחֵי מֵתִים:
כט וַיַּכְעִיסוּ בְּמַעַלְלֵיהֶם וַתִּפְרָץ-בָּם מַגֵּפָה:
ל וַיַּעֲמֹד פִּינְחָס וַיְפַלֵּל וַתֵּעָצַר הַמַּגֵּפָה:
לא וַתֵּחָשֶׁב לוֹ לִצְדָקָה לְדֹר וָדֹר עַד-עוֹלָם:
לב וַיַּקְצִיפוּ עַל-מֵי מְרִיבָה וַיֵּרַע לְמֹשֶׁה בַּעֲבוּרָם:
לג כִּי-הִמְרוּ אֶת-רוּחוֹ וַיְבַטֵּא בִּשְׂפָתָיו:

authority, (compare Berachot 31 on Samuel I 1,25), however, instead of being indicted, G'd considered Pinchas's deed as an act of righteousness for all times.

Since we have a rule that *tzedakah*, charity, righteousness saves from death, the Psalmist here chooses this expression to make the point that Pinchas was granted eternal life. He became the prophet Elijah as our sages explain on the words (Numbers 25,13) "here I have given him My covenant of peace." (Baba Metzia 114) While alive on this earth, the expression *ledor vador*, from generation to generation, applies to him. After he ascended to heaven, the expression *ad olam*, for ever, applies to him. (compare Kings II, 2,11)

Not only did Pinchas save the people of his own generation who had committed the cardinal sins of idol worshipping and sexual immorality, but this effect is felt through the generations, so that even we in our exile may hope for redemption as a consequence.

32. The Jews in exile continue to recite occasions when Israel had angered G'd. They use these occasions as an argument that G'd should not deny them His love and should hasten the advent of redemption. After all, when Israel angered G'd at *mey merivah* the waters of strife, (Numbers 20,2–11) G'd punished Moses FOR THEIR SAKE, so that he would be resurrected together with his generation and they would all come to the land of Israel because of G'd's love for them.

33. Should you counter that Moses after all was punished because he did not comply with G'd's instructions, and hit the rock instead of speaking to it, (Numbers 20,11) the answer is that Moses' sin was not serious enough to forfeit at least burial in the land of Israel. After all, Israel had provoked him greatly and he was under duress when he made his mistake. We have explained all this in our commentary of the Torah in Parshat Chukat. Moses had been AWARE that water could be produced from the rock by speaking to it. Israel at the time provoked him, each group pointing to a particular rock and demanding that water be produced from that rock.

34They did not destroy the nations as the LORD had commanded them,
35but mingled with the nations and learned their ways.
36They worshiped their idols, which became a snare for them.
37Their own sons and daughters they sacrificed to demons.
38They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; so the land was polluted with bloodguilt.
39Thus they became defiled by their acts, debauched through their deeds.
40The LORD was angry with His people and He abhorred His inheritance.
41He handed them over to the nations; their foes ruled them.
42Their enemies oppressed them and they were subject to their power.
43He saved them time and again, but they were deliberately rebellious, and so they were brought low by their iniquity.

Whenever Moses pointed to a rock from which he could produce water, they accused him of selecting his rock because he was a professional water diviner. When Moses realized how distrustful they were of him, he did not think that they deserved the additional miracle of receiving water merely by him speaking to the rock, and he produced the water by relying on his personal merit. He challenged them saying "do you think from this rock we will produce water FOR YOU?", i.e. do you think you deserve this? Therefore he hit the rock with the staff of G'd, – to show that the water was produced by an act of G'd and NOT by his ability to divine water.

From all this we see that Moses' sin was quite minor, and that if G'd decreed that he was to be buried in the land of Moab, this was only in order to eventually benefit his entire generation. This is the meaning of *va-yevate bissfatav*, he expressed it with his lips. He had addressed Israel by saying *shim-u na hamorim*, listen after all you rebellious ones" (Numbers 20,10) Compare Midrash Rabbah Deut. 2,9 and Midrash Hagadol on Deut, 3,26.

34. Another sin of omission the Israelites were guilty of under

לד לֹא-הִשְׁמִידוּ אֶת-הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה לָהֶם:
לה וַיִּתְעָרְבוּ בַגּוֹיִם וַיִּלְמְדוּ מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם:
לו וַיַּעַבְדוּ אֶת-עֲצַבֵּיהֶם וַיִּהְיוּ לָהֶם לְמוֹקֵשׁ:
לז וַיִּזְבְּחוּ אֶת-בְּנֵיהֶם וְאֶת-בְּנוֹתֵיהֶם לַשֵּׁדִים:
לח וַיִּשְׁפְּכוּ דָם נָקִי דַּם-בְּנֵיהֶם וּבְנוֹתֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר זִבְחוּ
לַעֲצַבֵּי כְנָעַן וַתֶּחֱנַף הָאָרֶץ בַּדָּמִים:
לט וַיִּטְמְאוּ בְמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם וַיִּזְנוּ בְּמַעַלְלֵיהֶם:
מ וַיִּחַר-אַף יְהוָה בְּעַמּוֹ וַיְתָעֵב אֶת-נַחֲלָתוֹ:
מא וַיִּתְּנֵם בְּיַד-גּוֹיִם וַיִּמְשְׁלוּ בָהֶם שֹׂנְאֵיהֶם:
מב וַיִּלְחָצוּם אוֹיְבֵיהֶם וַיִּכָּנְעוּ תַּחַת יָדָם:
מג פְּעָמִים רַבּוֹת יַצִּילֵם וְהֵמָּה יַמְרוּ בַעֲצָתָם וַיָּמֹכּוּ
בַּעֲוֹנָם:

Joshua, was that they did not destroy all the Canaanite nations in Eretz Yisrael.

35. As a result, they intermarried and copied the Canaanite practices and wicked ways.

36. This led to Israel worshipping the Canaanite idols, which became a trap for them. When they saw this, and noticed that the local inhabitants did NOT come to harm though serving the same idols, they reasoned that they were suffering because they had not served those idols with sufficient dedication.

37. As a result, they resorted to child sacrifices to demons etc.

38. As a consequence the land became filled with the blood of innocently killed sons and daughters. They also killed those whom they feared would revenge their parents' having been sacrificed to demons.

39. Finally, they added sexual immorality to the list of their cardinal sins.

40. By then G'd had become so angry at His people that He abhorred His "inheritance".

41. Therefore, He delivered them into the hands of gentile nations, and those who hated the Jews gained control of them.

42. Then their enemies oppressed them, and they were humbled once they had been driven out of their land. To the query why G'd

44When He saw that they were in distress, when He heard their cry,
45He was mindful of His covenant and in His great faithfulness relented.
46He made all their captors kindly disposed toward them.
47Deliver us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the nations, to acclaim Your holy name, to glory in Your praise.
48Blessed is the LORD, God of Israel, From eternity to eternity.
Let all the people say, "Amen".
Hallelujah.

had to exile them and risk their assimilation amongst the gentile nations, why not rather discipline them in their own country?

43. The holy spirit answers that indeed G'd had tried that remedy repeatedly, and had saved them in their own country, but the effect had been counterproductive. Each salvation – while they were still in possession of their land – resulted in their rebelling, becoming proud. Their wickedness eventually made them so devoid of *mitzvot*, meritorious deeds to offset some of their sins that *vayamochu*, while laden with sins they had no offsetting merits. Had G'd allowed them to stay in their land and had punished them in accordance with what they deserved, there would have been no Jews left. Therefore, the penalty of exile was needed to afford Israel partial expiation and to guarantee their survival as a nation.

44. The reason G'd had waited so long (till 7 High Courts had been guilty of idolatrous practices) was that as long as Israel still studied Torah, G'd took pity on them, i.e. He heard their *rinah*, their Torah. As long as Torah was being studied, He did not detest them. Only when Torah study ceased, did G'd detest them, and could no longer overlook the sin of idol worship.

45. Although they had exhausted the accumulated merits of their forefathers, G'd remembered the covenant, and in His great kindness did not annihilate them.

46. After this, when they had to shoulder the weight of their sins all by themselves, with neither Torah study nor their ancestors' merits to fall back on to lessen their punishment, He treated them with mercy in the plain view of all those who had taken them captive. The very fact that they were captives was considered part of their atonement.

47. This line is a request by the exiled community of Israel. They

מד וַיַּרְא בַּצַּר לָהֶם בְּשָׁמְעוֹ אֶת-רִנָּתָם׃
מה וַיִּזְכֹּר לָהֶם בְּרִיתוֹ וַיִּנָּחֵם כְּרֹב חֲסָדָו׃
מו וַיִּתֵּן אוֹתָם לְרַחֲמִים לִפְנֵי כָּל-שׁוֹבֵיהֶם׃
מז הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְקַבְּצֵנוּ מִן-הַגּוֹיִם לְהוֹדוֹת
לְשֵׁם קָדְשֶׁךָ לְהִשְׁתַּבֵּחַ בִּתְהִלָּתֶךָ׃
מח בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן-הָעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם
וְאָמַר כָּל-הָעָם אָמֵן הַלְלוּיָהּ׃

say to G'd: "You have saved Israel repeatedly, and each time they have had a relapse into sinful conduct. This was due to two causes. 1) The saviour on each occasion had been an intermediary, i.e. a human being. 2) the state of exile had remained, hence it was easy to suffer relapses. If however, You Yourself would help us AND bring us back to our land, then we would not have to copy the evil ways of our gentile neighbours. Besides, after having been humbled in exile, we would not thirst for honour, glory and power as the gentile nations do, but would give thanks to Your holy name, and find satisfaction in praising Your Fame, Your accomplishments. All of this we have been unable to do in exile for fear of provoking our hosts and for fear of ridicule. The nations of the world, by sarcastically asking us about the whereabouts of our G'd, have effectively undermined our ability to praise You. They consider themselves as essential in this universe, and consider us as only marginally important. (compare Bereshit Rabbah 83,4)

As long as we are not back in our homeland, we are hardly in a position to refute their arguments.

48. We bless G'd saying that ever since He created the earth, it was for the sake of Israel. The Midrash Bereshit Rabbah points out that such instructions as "command the Children of Israel", speak to the Children of Israel" had been recorded in the Torah already 2000 years before the universe had been created. (compare also Talmud Pessachim 54.)

ad ha-olam, until the distant future. Once we will be reunited in our land, no gentile will dare open his mouth against us, i.e. the entire nation will be able to proclaim Amen in one voice. To symbolize that G'd was and will be the Lord of Israel, the Psalmist says *hallelu y-h*, praise the Lord with His 2 lettered name, since with that name He created both worlds.

BOOK FIVE

107 *"Praise the LORD, for He is good; His steadfast love is eternal!"*
2Thus let the redeemed of the LORD say, those He redeemed from adversity,
3whom He gathered in from the lands, from east and west, from the north and from the sea.
4Some lost their way in the wilderness, in the wasteland; they found no settled place.
5Hungry and thirsty, their spirit failed.
6In their adversity they cried to the LORD, and He rescued them from their troubles.
7He showed them a direct way to reach a settled place.

Psalm 107

1. Since Israel could have thought that they owed a debt of gratitude to the patriarchs whose merit triggered the Exodus, the Psalmist reminds Israel that proclamations of gratitude are in order ONLY vis a vis G'd, whose kindness is everlasting, and who did not make the Exodus dependent on our merits. Had we relied on ancestral merits, – G'd's kindness would not have sufficed without input of some merits of our own.

2. Who is supposed to proclaim these thanks? The people who were redeemed at the sea, i.e. who had become the beneficiaries of G'd's DIRECT intervention against the *tzar*, oppressor, the *saro shel mitzrayim* (celestial representative of the Egyptians at the heavenly Court.)

The generation of the Exodus had been guilty, the *sar shel mitzrayim* having pointed out to G'd that both the Egyptians and the Israelites worshipped idols, and that Israel had already been assigned to G'd's attribute of justice, as our sages point out on Exodus 14,19. "The angel of *ELOKIM* (attribute of justice) travelled after them." (compare Yalkut Shimoni 233.) We see that Israel had been exposed to the attribute of justice had not G'd's mercy interfered and had joined the attribute of justice, the *malach elokim*.

We have a similar interpretation of Samael having appealed to G'd for the destruction of the Jewish people, citing their idol worship. This is why the word *chomah*, (normally meaning wall) in Exodus 14,29 is spelled without the customary letter *vav*. This hints at the *chemah*, anger that existed at the time regarding the inadequacies of the

קז א הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי-טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ:
ב יֹאמְרוּ גְּאוּלֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר גְּאָלָם מִיַּד-צָר:
ג וּמֵאֲרָצוֹת קִבְּצָם מִמִּזְרָח וּמִמַּעֲרָב מִצָּפוֹן וּמִיָּם:
ד תָּעוּ בַמִּדְבָּר בִּישִׁימוֹן דָּרֶךְ עִיר מוֹשָׁב לֹא מָצָאוּ:
ה רְעֵבִים גַּם-צְמֵאִים נַפְשָׁם בָּהֶם תִּתְעַטָּף:
ו וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל-יְהוָה בַּצַּר לָהֶם מִמְּצוּקוֹתֵיהֶם יַצִּילֵם:
ז וַיַּדְרִיכֵם בְּדֶרֶךְ יְשָׁרָה לָלֶכֶת אֶל-עִיר מוֹשָׁב:

Jewish people at that moment. Without G'd's kindness – the attribute of mercy –, the merit of the patriarchs would not have sufficed to produce redemption. (Midrash Hagadol)

3. The MANNER in which G'd assembled the whole Jewish nation at one time, – a nation spread over an area of more than 400 kilometers square, is proof that G'd's kindness was at work, as this went far beyond anything He had promised to the patriarchs, and had nothing whatever to do with their merit.

4–7. After having stated Israel's obligation to thank G'd in general terms, the Psalmist addresses 4 specific instances when private individuals need to verbalize their gratitude to G'd. (when the temple is standing, they may have to offer a thanksgiving sacrifice, *korban todah*)

He begins with people who have travelled the desert, the word *yeshimon* apparently being superfluous. Also the word *derech*, way, does not seem necessary. It may be that the Psalmist teaches that one needs to offer *todah* thanks, for merely not having become lost, for not even having suffered thirst or hunger. The Talmud, when stating that the *holchey midbar*, desert travellers have to give thanks, does not differentiate whether those wanderers had lost their way, were weary, suffered thirst etc. (Berachot 54)

The Psalmist may wish to point out that NOT having suffered ANY discomfort such as those listed when traversing the desert, is perhaps the greatest kindness of all which G'd has displayed. Therefore, although the Psalmist begins with people who though having felt exposed to danger had been saved, – such as the examples in verses 4–6, he is telling us that even the ones who had travelled WITHOUT incident, i.e. the ones listed in verse 7, – have to give thanks to the Lord also. They had been in danger though they had not been aware of it.

8Let them praise the LORD for His steadfast love, His
wondrous deeds for mankind;
9for He has satisfied the thirsty, filled the hungry with
all good things.
10Some lived in deepest darkness, bound in cruel irons,
11because they defied the word of God, spurned the
counsel of the Most High.
12He humbled their hearts through suffering; they
stumbled with no one to help.

8. They all have to acknowledge G'd's kindness. Those who had been lost etc. and who are aware of Divine guidance in having found their way home, have to thank G'd for *nifla-ot*, miracles.

9. If the Psalmist had referred to *shokekah* and *meleyah tov*, i.e. yearning and filled with good, this would have sounded more appropriate, since there seems no need to repeat the word *nefesh*, soul. Besides, why does the Psalmist stress the *Massbia*, i.e. providing adequate food aspect of what G'd does for the desert traveller rather than the fact that he had been saved from other more imminent dangers?

Man has two kinds of *nefesh* soul. 1) One *nefesh* is the animalistic soul, the life-force common to all living creatures, the force which yearns for food and drink in order to survive. 2) Man also has a superior soul which always yearns to attach itself to its Creator. When the body this latter soul inhabits does not carry out the will of its Creator, this superior soul longs for Torah and *mitzvot*.

The Psalmist goes on record as saying that the person who has been saved from danger should not make the focus of his gratitude the physical needs that have been restored to him, but should concentrate on appreciating that his spiritual yearnings, i.e. *nefesh shokekah* has been given a new opportunity to be fulfilled. He should consider the crisis he had experienced prior to being saved as part of the atonement for his sins, and thank G'd for giving him another opportunity to live the kind of life he should be living. When that is the case, provisions for his physical needs i.e. *nefesh re-ayvah* have become justified since they serve his spiritual needs. Only THEN can stilling someone's hunger be objectively called *tov*, good. Even eating one's fill, i.e. *miley*, can be called *tov*, when it serves to elevate the person who eats, spiritually.

10. The second category of people who have to give thanks, are people who have been imprisoned. Some prisoners are not shackled but are kept in dark cells, and therefore are unable to move about

ח יוֹדוּ לַיהוָה חַסְדּוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לִבְנֵי אָדָם:
ט כִּי-הִשְׂבִּיעַ נֶפֶשׁ שׁוֹקֵקָה וְנֶפֶשׁ רְעֵבָה מִלֵּא-טוֹב:
י יֹשְׁבֵי חֹשֶׁךְ וְצַלְמָוֶת אֲסִירֵי עֹנִי וּבַרְזֶל:
יא כִּי-הִמְרוּ אִמְרֵי-אֵל וַעֲצַת עֶלְיוֹן נָאָצוּ:
יב וַיַּכְנַע בֶּעָמָל לִבָּם כָּשְׁלוּ וְאֵין עֹזֵר:

freely. Others are chained, and though there is light in their cells, they can still not move about. The Psalmist refers to both categories separately. Whereas the second category – if they have some financial means – may bribe the jailers not to put them in irons, the *ani*, the poor are put in irons not having any money to bribe their jailers.

11. Why had these prisoners been so ill treated? Because they had traded their G'd and spurned the advice of the Supreme Being. G'd had done man two favours. First of all He had given him the choice between choosing a path of life ending in death, and a path leading to eternal life. "I have placed life and death before You... choose life so you will live as well as your offspring". (Deut. 30,19)

The ADVICE to choose life, though sounding simplistic, is interpreted by Midrash Rabbah as follows. A person encounters a fork in the road, 2 vistas (paths) open up before him. One path is wide, tree lined, pleasant, the other narrow, crooked and unpaved. Naturally, not knowing where either path leads, he tends to choose the first path. However, an old man warns him that that path will become very difficult once he has travelled a short distance, whereas the second path – after a few bends in the road will lead to beautiful scenery, orchards etc. In a similar manner, the Torah warns, i.e. gives advice ***atzat elyon***, to follow the second path, since it will lead to eternal life. By not accepting the Torah's advice concerning which way to use our freedom of choice, the prisoners described in verse 10 ended up where they are.

G'd hopes that the humbling experience of imprisonment etc. will trigger feelings of remorse instead of the haughty independence of spirit which had been the cause man travelled down the wrong path. Choosing the pleasures of THIS life, at the expense of eternal life, i.e. spurning G'd's advice, results in withdrawal of G'd's Personal Protection for a person or for His people.

12. When does a person realize that he adopted the wrong values? When he falls into prison and all the friends he formerly caroused with, fail to come to his assistance. If he makes transient

13In their adversity they cried to the LORD, and He rescued them from their troubles.
14He brought them out of deepest darkness, broke their bonds asunder.
15Let them praise the LORD for His steadfast love, His wondrous deeds for mankind,
16For He shattered gates of bronze, He broke their iron bars.
17There were fools who suffered for their sinful way, and for their iniquities.
18All food was loathsome to them; they reached the gates of death.

values the mainstay of his existence, he will find that when he needs those values to sustain him, – they have disappeared.

13. At that point, such a person may call upon G'd to save him from his troubles, rescue him from his straits.

14. Then HE leads such persons out of darkness and the shadow of death, and tears their bonds, considering their experiences in jail and their new found humility as part of their expiation. The jail described by the Psalmist is a hyperbole for purgatory, where these people's souls wind up and suffered after their bodies had died. In other words, the Psalmist refers to *gehinnam*. It is a two stage process. First these people are absolved from the SENTENCE to purgatory, referred to as *mischoshech vetzalmavet*, from darkness and the shadow of death, – afterwards comes their actual release, i.e. *mimossroteyhem yenatek*.

15/16. Under those conditions, when Israel gives thanks to G'd, they will not thank Him for taking them out of the darkness of jail, but for having broken their bonds, i.e. their copper doors and iron bars i.e. that the gates of prayer which had been locked to them have been opened, and He has heard their supplications. In turn their iron bars, i.e. their guilt which had caused these "copper doors" to be locked, He broke. Their prayers had to be the first step, which in turn enables G'd to smash the forces of *tumah*, impurity.

17. "Those who were unwise as to the nature of their sin". We find that it had not occurred to king Hezzekiah, the king of Yehudah that his failure to marry and have children was a sin, since the reason he did not marry was his knowledge that he would produce unworthy children. It took his sickness to teach him that he had sinned, and as a result he mended his ways and got married. (Talmud Berachot 11)

יג וַיִּזְעֲקוּ אֶל-יְהוָה בַּצַּר לָהֶם מִמְּצוּקוֹתֵיהֶם יוֹשִׁיעֵם:
יד יוֹצִיאֵם מֵחֹשֶׁךְ וְצַלְמָוֶת וּמוֹסְרוֹתֵיהֶם יְנַתֵּק:
טו יוֹדוּ לַיהוָה חַסְדּוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לִבְנֵי אָדָם:
טז כִּי-שִׁבַּר דַּלְתוֹת נְחֹשֶׁת וּבְרִיחֵי בַרְזֶל גִּדֵּעַ:
יז אֱוִלִים מִדֶּרֶךְ פִּשְׁעָם וּמֵעֲוֹנֹתֵיהֶם יִתְעַנּוּ:
יח כָּל-אֹכֶל תִּתְעַב נַפְשָׁם וַיַּגִּיעוּ עַד-שַׁעֲרֵי-מָוֶת:
יט וַיִּזְעֲקוּ אֶל-יְהוָה בַּצַּר לָהֶם מִמְּצוּקוֹתֵיהֶם יוֹשִׁיעֵם:

Perhaps the Psalmist refers to people who erroneously believe that they have not sinned.

G'd subjects such people to disease, to afford them the opportunity to review their lifestyle and discover where they have been remiss and repent and correct their mistakes.

These are the fools, – "in respect of the path of their crime", – or in the case of more serious sins, their sufferings are apt to be such that they detest all they eat. *kol ochel tetaev nafshom*, they castigate themselves by fasting. Or, the Psalmist tells us that not every sinner is fortunate enough for G'd to inflict sickness upon him to alert him to the fact that he has sinned and should repent. The only sinners who are treated by G'd in this fashion, are those who have been misled by a false notion, *ruach shtut* to such an extent that repeated sins appear to them like a single *pesha*, transgression. Such people have become so USED to their conduct, that they are foolish enough to consider themselves as righteous.

Evilim, their foolishness is due to *derech pisham*, the manner in which they have sinned. Their sins have become so NATURAL to them, and would never lead to repentance, that unless rudely shocked through afflictions, there is no hope for them. Although *hit-anu*, (reflexive) they should have fasted voluntarily to achieve atonement, G'd shocks them into such fasting, *me-avonoteyhem*, through the diseases He inflicts upon them, so that they are forced to fast through abhorring all food.

18. This continues till they are at the gate of death. The vowel *a* under the letter *vav* in the word *va-yagi-u*, indicates, that this proximity to death has occurred already, is not something in the future as would be the case if the Psalmist had put the *shevah* semi vowel under the letter *vav*, i.e. *ve-yagi-u*. This word *ve-yagi-u* would have corresponded to the future tense *te-ta-ev*, will abhor.

The Zohar in Parshat Vayechi states that 30 days prior to death,

19In their adversity they cried to the LORD and He saved them from their troubles.
20He gave an order and healed them; He delivered them from the pits.
21Let them praise the LORD for His steadfast love, His wondrous deeds for mankind.
22Let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices, and tell His deeds in joyful song.

the soul starts commuting between the celestial regions and it body nightly, and is shown its eventual place in the celestial regions, – whether in *Gan Eden* or *Gehinnam* respectively. Man is unaware of this, however.

Most terminal diseases are intestinal disorders of one kind or another. On the one hand, it is natural that food intake strengthens the body. On the other hand, a soul is aware that this food is no longer of benefit to the body it inhabits, seeing the body will die within 30 days, begins to detest ALL food, views it with abhorrence. The Psalmist describes the reaction of the soul, *nafshom* to such food when the soul is aware of *vayagi-u ad sha-arey mavet*, that its body is at the gates of death. Food has lost the power to restore the life-force of the one who absorbs it.

19. Even at that stage of proximity to death, G'd listens to the prayer of the sick and redeems them from their straits. The *metzukot* referred to are the sins which cause these people's death, i.e. G'd listens when the sick person prays because of his sins. The expression *yoshiem*, He will save them, indicates that G'd had already abandoned them, i.e. handed them over to their sins. He does not *yatzilem*, SAVE them PRIOR to their *sha-arey mavet*, having been at the gates of death.

20. Seeing that we have a tradition that any sick person who recovers has been assigned a doctor or a remedy from heaven, it is possible to argue that such a doctor or remedy possesses independent healing capabilities. The Psalmist tells us that this is not so. Just as we read in Isaiah 55,11, that "G'd's word does not return to Him without having accomplished its mission", so the Psalmist tells us that G'd, by issuing instructions i.e. *yishlach devaro*, is the force behind the cure that will take place, *veyirpa-em*, Rabbi Yoshua in Chagigah 14, states that "every utterance of G'd creates an angel who carries out G'd's wishes". This is what is referred to here.

Despite the fact that the doctor or medicine or both do have an impact on the patient or on the disease itself, they are not the ones

כ יִשְׁלַח דְּבָרוֹ וְיִרְפָּאֵם וִימַלֵּט מִשְּׁחִיתוֹתָם:
כא יוֹדוּ לַיהוָה חַסְדּוֹ :נִפְלְאוֹתָיו לִבְנֵי אָדָם:
כב וְיִזְבְּחוּ זִבְחֵי תוֹדָה וִיסַפְּרוּ מַעֲשָׂיו בְּרִנָּה:

which produce the cure. Rather, the cure is the result of an utterance by G'd. He delivers the sick from their impending destruction. Even if the cure is long delayed and the disease sometimes lasts years, this does not mean that the pleas of the sick did not find a response. To save a person from purgatory after death, sometimes requires his suffering from a disease for a lengthy period.

22. Why does the Psalmist first describe the need to offer thanksgiving sacrifices before the need to verbalize what the thanksgiving sacrifices are all about? This is a departure from the instances of the desert traveller and the prisoner who needs to give thanks for his deliverance.

Here the Psalmist first requires *yodu lashem* (verse 21) just as in verses 8 and 15, and after having brought sacrifices the voyager is again required *vi-yessapru ma-assav berinah*, to relate His acts with jubilation!

Furthermore, in verse 23 the Psalmist refers to those who travel across the sea as descending into the sea". We have learned repeatedly that the sea is "higher" than the earth! How are these statements compatible then? (compare Bereshit Rabbah 5)

Besides, what does *ossey melachah* have to do with *yordey mayim*, those who perform work descending into the waters? What is meant by the words *heymah ra-u*, they have seen the deeds of G'd? If it refers to their having seen the storm and experienced their subsequent salvation, i.e. verse 28, why is this not mentioned after verse 28?

The word *heymah* in verse 24, seems superfluous. Who is subject to "he said" in verse 25? Instead of *vaya-amed ruach se-arah* made the stormy wind abate it should have said *vata-amed* if it refers to the "stormy wind" (feminine gender for *ruach*)? The word *bera-ah* in verse 26 is redundant, everybody knows that the experience referred to is unpleasant! In verse 29, instead of *yakem se-arah*, we would have expected the opposite, i.e. *yashev se-arah*, He makes the storm abate!

The commentary by Ibn Ezra on this verse seems very forced. Describing that the travellers rejoice in the relief experienced seems a banality. Who does not know this? Why is such an emotion NOT described when desert travellers come home safely?

23Others go down to the sea in ships, ply their trade in the mighty waters;
24they have seen the works of the LORD and His wonders in the deep.
25By His word He raised a storm wind that made the waves surge.
26Mounting up to the heaven, plunging down to the dephts, disgorging in their misery,
27they reeled and staggered like a drunken man, all their skill to no avail.
28In their adversity they cried to the LORD, and He saved them from their troubles.

The Psalmist wishes to teach us that when a person travels the sea and the sea is smooth, and the winds are fair, this is due to Divine guidance. We should not think that such a voyage can be compared to an overland journey. On the contrary, if a stormy voyage that resulted in a safe landing deserves that one expresses one's gratitude to the Lord, then a calm voyage deserves even greater gratitude, seeing that G'd had made the ENTIRE voyage pleasant, and had restrained the sea.

The Psalmist informs us that apart from 3 categories of people who have to acknowledge G'd's Personal Providence by words, there is another category who has to acknowledge it by thanksgiving offerings. This is the category of people who have experienced an uneventful calm crossing of the sea. They have to offer *zivchey todah*, thanksgiving offerings in addition to *vi-yessapru ma-assav*, relating His deeds. Having witnessed how G'd had tamed the sea, provided a path through the oceans, i.e. *hanoten bayam derech* (Isaiah 43,16) such a person is doubly obligated to vocalize his experiences!

23. Who are the ones who give thanks? Those who descended into the ships to travel in the sea. Since 2/3 of the ship is below the water line, the voyagers do indeed DESCEND into the sea. The people under discussion are those who deem themselves capable of performing work, *ossey melachah*, *bemayim rabim*, even in much water. They assume the waters to be calm, the conditions of the water to be favorable. They feel perfectly at ease.

24. They are the people who have seen G'd at work all the time, i.e. *ma-asey hashem*. The same cannot be said of the people the Psalmist refers to in verse 26. Those people are awed by the rise

כג יוֹרְדֵי הַיָּם בָּאֳנִיּוֹת עֹשֵׂי מְלָאכָה בְּמַיִם רַבִּים:
כד הֵמָּה רָאוּ מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו בִּמְצוּלָה:
כה וַיֹּאמֶר וַיַּעֲמֵד רוּחַ סְעָרָה וַתְּרוֹמֵם גַּלָּיו:
כו יַעֲלוּ שָׁמַיִם יֵרְדוּ תְהוֹמוֹת נַפְשָׁם בְּרָעָה תִתְמוֹגָג:
כז יָחוֹגּוּ וְיָנוּעוּ כַּשִּׁכּוֹר וְכָל-חָכְמָתָם תִּתְבַּלָּע:
כח וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל-יְהוָה בַּצַּר לָהֶם וּמִמְּצוּקוֹתֵיהֶם יוֹצִיאֵם:
כט יָקֵם סְעָרָה לִדְמָמָה וַיֶּחֱשׁוּ גַּלֵּיהֶם:

and fall of the waves,– have no time to reflect on G'd's part in keeping the seas calm.

25. When G'd spoke to the *sar shel yam*, the celestial power representing the oceans, the latter raised a storm resulting in the waves rising skywards and descending into the depths so that the voyagers' souls dissolved from their experience.

26. The storm – homiletically speaking – is the result of people's sins, since without sins there are no afflictions. These sins assume the shape of a storm that threatens to engulf the voyager, i.e. the human being on the sea of life. Our sins threaten *bera-ah titmogag*, to break us, dissolve us, due to the evil we have done. This "storm" is the catalyst that triggers our *teshuvah*, repentance.

This thought is expressed in Job 1,19 "and here a great wind came from the wilderness and smote the 4 corners of the house etc." The reference is to the *ruach*, spirit of *tum-ah* impurity. Were this not so, the *ruach* mentioned in Job would not need to come from beyond the desert. Bildad refers to this phenomenon when he tells Job 8,4 "if your sons have sinned against Him – He sends them by means of their iniquity". What he means is that the sins, by assuming the form of a stormy wind are apt to harass the sinner and trigger his penitence.

27. They reel and stagger like a drunk. People subjected to such troubles are incapable of offering coherent prayers. They are not like the group which experiences a calm sea voyage and sings the praises of the Lord acknowledging His deeds with jubilation.

28. The passengers of the stormy voyage can only cry out to G'd in their distress. As a result, only HE can rescue them from their straits, their *tze-akah*, outcry being disorganized, does not really influence their fate. (*Metzukah* instead of *tze-akah*, i.e. because of their distress and not because of their prayer, outcry.)

29*He reduced the storm to a whisper; the waves were stilled.*
30*They rejoiced when all was quiet, and He brought them to the port they desired.*
31*Let them praise the LORD for His steadfast love, His wondrous deeds for mankind.*
32*Let them exalt Him in the congregation of the people, acclaim Him in the assembly of the elders.*
33*He turns the rivers into a wilderness, springs of water into thirsty land,*
34*fruitful land into a salt marsh, because of the wickedness of its inhabitants.*

29. Even when he turns the storm into calm, and the waves have been silenced, – they are still in trouble, since they are not getting closer to their destination, the waters being becalmed.

30. Nonetheless, they rejoice, having regained their sanity. Still, they have not found the formula to pray, and if G'd brings them to their destination this is an act of pure kindness on His part.

32. Maimonides in Hilchot Berachot 10,8 states that the verbalized thanksgiving of the 4 categories of people who have been exposed to danger must be recited in the presence of 10 male Jewish adults, 2 of whom need to be scholars. He bases this statement on our verse *u-vemoshav zekeynim yehalleluhu.* (compare mar Zutra Berachot 54)

The Talmud queries why the 2 scholars need not be additional to the forum of ten men, and does not supply an answer.

Perhaps we can suggest an answer to this query. When referring to *am*, i.e. the plain people, the method of thanking G'd described by the Psalmist is *vi-yerommemuhu*, they will exalt Him, whereas when referring to the *moshav zekeynim*, the scholars, the Psalmist requires only *vi-yehalleluhu*, that they praise Him. Since the former do not feel that G'd's greatness has to be acknowledged except when they have experienced His miracles, the term "exalt Him" may be appropriate. The scholars however, who do not need miracles to know that G'd is exalted, need only to hear G'd praised in order to realize that someone had experienced His *hashgacha peratit*, His Personal Providence. If both expressions used by the Psalmist had preceded the words *kehal am uvemoshav zekeynim*, I might have argued that "the people" and "the seat of the elders" are cumulative terms, i.e. that both a quorum plus 2 scholars need to be present when someone recites the benediction *hagomel*, i.e. thanking G'd for his

ל וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ כִי-יִשְׁתֹּקוּ וַיַּנְחֵם אֶל-מְחוֹז חֶפְצָם:
לא יוֹדוּ לַיהוָה חַסְדּוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לִבְנֵי אָדָם:
לב וִירוֹמְמוּהוּ בִּקְהַל עָם וּבְמוֹשַׁב זְקֵנִים יְהַלְלוּהוּ:
לג יָשֵׂם נְהָרוֹת לְמִדְבָּר וּמֹצָאֵי מַיִם לְצִמָּאוֹן:
לד אֶרֶץ פְּרִי לִמְלֵחָה מֵרָעַת יוֹשְׁבֵי בָהּ:

rescue. Since however, the term *moshav zekeynim* is placed after the words "they shall exalt Him", the Psalmist only wants to tell us that in the presence of scholars G'd only needs to be praised not exalted.

33. After having told us about the 4 categories of people who have personally experienced Divine Providence in their lives, and the need for them to publicly acknowledge this, one could ask why G'd restricts manifestation of His Providence only to those 4 categories. How would the remainder of the people become aware, i.e. witness G'd's Personal Providence? Would it not be better for G'd to manifest Himself in such a way that everyone could witness His Personal Providence? Besides, is it not a fact that in spite of G'd manifesting Himself in miraculous fashion, the average person fails to see the supernatural element in such manifestations by G'd and considers the respective phenomena as natural ones?

The Psalmist points out – with his holy spirit – that there are miracles which everyone will recognize as such. They occur in 3 areas. 1) inert matter, such as water, earth, plant life. 2) amongst inarticulate living creatures. 3) amongst articulate living creatures.

He commences by referring to happenings in the world of inert matter. The provision of rivers in the middle of the desert defies all logic and as such surely points to a supernatural act of G'd. On the other hand, when the most irrigated land suddenly turns into a salty waste due to the wickedness of its inhabitants, this too demonstrates the personal involvement of the Creator. It is He who has turned the desert into a pool of water, in order for the hungry to be able to found cities on that site.

The reference to turning *eretz pri*, a fruitful land into salty waste, is to the Jordan valley which used to contain the cities Sodom, Gomorrah etc. This area had been renowned for its fertility. He turns rivers, i.e. sources of irrigation into a desert, and the springs of water into a drought.

34. It was well known that the wickedness of these people caused G'd to destroy this fertile land. It is proof that He supervises the conduct of man.

35He turns the wilderness into pools, parched land into spings of water.
36There He settles the hungry; they build a place to settle in.
37They sow fields and plant vineyards that yield a fruitful harvest.
38He blesses them and they increase greatly; and He does not let their cattle decrease,
39after they had been few and crushed by oppression, misery, and sorrow.
40He pours contempt on great men and makes them lose their way in trackless deserts;

35. At the same time, He also converts barren land into a source of beneficial water for those who do His will, as we read in Psalms 23,2 "He makes me lie down on green pastures etc." The Midrash describes how the prince of every tribe used his cane to trace a line from Miriam's well, which would bring water to the encampment area of his tribe, and which would result in the greening of the desert in that location. (Tanchuma Chukat 21.)

36. *vaye-ancha vayar-ivecha*, He afflicted you and made you suffer hunger". The "hungry ones" referred to are Israel. This is a reference to Deut. 8,3.

37. He made the desert fit to inhabit. They seeded fields etc. These are all examples of G'd working miracles with the inert parts of nature.

38. Here we come to the miracles performed with living creatures. Whereas, normally, the desert harbours snakes and other creatures dangerous to man, in this instance not only were the Israelites themselves attacked, but even their livestock did not decrease due to the presence of predators.

39. You might counter that tens of thousands of Israelites died in the desert from sudden plagues, such as are reported in Numbers 11,33–34, 25,8–9 etc., and that therefore we have evidence that Israel's presence in the desert took its toll. The Psalmist explains that every time Israel suffered such losses in manpower, it was NOT the lack of provisions in the desert that caused this, but on the contrary, it was the result of arrogance induced by their successes, such as after the defeat of Sichon and Og, when they allowed themselves to be seduced by the daughters of Moab and Midian. It was G'd's withholding permission for incestuous marriages which had prompted

לה יָשֵׂם מִדְבָּר לַאֲגַם-מַיִם וְאֶרֶץ צִיָּה לְמֹצָאֵי מָיִם:
לו וַיּוֹשֶׁב שָׁם רְעֵבִים וַיְכוֹנְנוּ עִיר מוֹשָׁב:
לז וַיִּזְרְעוּ שָׂדוֹת וַיִּטְּעוּ כְרָמִים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ פְּרִי תְבוּאָה:
לח וַיְבָרְכֵם וַיִּרְבּוּ מְאֹד וּבְהֶמְתָּם לֹא יַמְעִיט:
לט וַיִּמְעֲטוּ וַיָּשֹׁחוּ מֵעֹצֶר רָעָה וְיָגוֹן:
מ שֹׁפֵךְ בּוּז עַל-נְדִיבִים וַיַּתְעֵם בְּתֹהוּ לֹא-דָרֶךְ:

their dissatisfaction, or the *me-otzer*, the lack of restraint displayed at *Shittim*.

At any rate G'd has displayed His mastery both over inert matter and the animal kingdom by making both behave in an unnatural manner.

40. Nonetheless it could be argued that G'd's mastery had been demonstrated only vis a vis creatures who have no free will, are not free agents to do as they see fit, but that in the case of the latter, G'd is unable to exercise control.

The Psalmist points out that WITHOUT interfering with man's free will, G'd is instrumental in frustrating wicked people's minds and plans so that they receive their due for their wickedness.

For instance, who would have thought that the Egyptians would be foolish enough to pursue the Israelites into the sea and display such lack of intelligence! If the phenomenon (splitting of the sea) had been a natural one, due to the blowing of the wind in the same direction, they should have considered that the wind could shift at any moment with disastrous results. If, on the other hand, they saw in this the hand of G'd, were they really foolish enough to assume that G'd had done this for their sake? They should have realized that it was a trap for them!

However, G'd had allowed the Egyptians to draw the wrong conclusions when they had observed Israel turning around at Pi Hachirot. (Exodus 14,2–3)

Also, the Egyptians had given the Jews much more than the latter had asked for at the time they were about to leave, so that the Torah had described the Jews as having "emptied" Egypt of treasure. (Exodus 12,36) This is what the Psalmist refers to when he says *shofech buz*. G'd had temporarily made them aware of how contemptuous they had been of their wealth when they handed it to the Israelites. The reason they had been so generous had been that they realized that the Jews could have stolen all their belongings during the plague of darkness, but had failed to steal a single trinket.

41*but the needy He secures from suffering, and increases their families like flocks.*
42*The upright see it and rejoice; the mouth of all wrongdoers is stopped.*
43*The wise man will take note of these things; he will consider the steadfast love of the LORD.*

108 *A song. A psalm of David.*
2*My heart is firm, O God; I will sing and chant a hymn with all my soul.*
3*Awake, O harp and lyre! I will wake the dawn.*
4*I will praise You among the peoples, O LORD, sing a hymn to You among the nations;*

Hence, when the Jews asked to "borrow" these items, and the Egyptians after first failing to acknowledge that they possessed such trinkets, had been given a list by the Israelite neighbour of what he knew they possessed, were so impressed with the Jews' honesty that they showered them with such trinkets.

Once they had convinced themselves that the Israelites had not just left for a 3 day celebration to their G'd, but had "fled", the fact that they had given them all these riches made them doubly anxious to recover them, and they ran all unreasonable risks in order to recover these items.

41. It was G'd who had elevated the Israelites during the plague of darkness from a position of *oni*, poverty, or, who had given the Israelites an opportunity to take advantage of the Egyptians' state of *ONI*, defenselessness which later on resulted in the Egyptians being so anxious to recover their wealth, that they threw all caution to the winds at the sea and enabled G'd to drown them.

At the same time G'd did not encourage the neighboring countries to attack Israel in order to rob them of these trinkets. He made the *mishpachot*, related families of nations such as the Philistines meek as *tzon* sheep.

42. Here the Psalmist explains in detail how G'd had elevated the defenseless (verse 40) and how the *yesharim*, righteous Jews were in a position to rejoice, since the Egyptians had not been in a position to deny their requests to borrow the silver and golden trinkets they had located during the plague of darkness. All iniquity closes its mouth, i.e. they knew the Egyptians could not deny owning the items in question.

מא וַיְשַׂגֵּב אֶבְיוֹן מֵעוֹנִי וַיָּשֶׂם כַּצֹּאן מִשְׁפָּחוֹת׃
מב יִרְאוּ יְשָׁרִים וְיִשְׂמָחוּ וְכָל-עַוְלָה קָפְצָה פִּיהָ׃
מג מִי-חָכָם וְיִשְׁמָר-אֵלֶּה וְיִתְבּוֹנְנוּ חַסְדֵי יְהוָה׃

קח

א שִׁיר מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד׃
ב נָכוֹן לִבִּי אֱלֹהִים אָשִׁירָה וַאֲזַמְּרָה אַף-כְּבוֹדִי׃
ג עוּרָה הַנֵּבֶל וְכִנּוֹר אָעִירָה שָׁחַר׃
ד אוֹדְךָ בָעַמִּים יְהוָה וַאֲזַמֶּרְךָ בַּלְאֻמִּים׃

43. When the Psalmist concludes describing how G'd intervenes in nature BOTH by turning the wasteland into a source of wealth and vice versa, he adds that anyone who has some intelligence, *mi chacham*, must surely take note of these things, *vehitbonen*, and understand their meaning! This is the Psalmist's answer to those who ask why only 4 categories of people have been singled out to thank G'd publicly for their personal experiences of G'd's kindness.

The fact is that no one has an excuse to deny that G'd exercises personal supervision of history, and that history abounds with evidence of the miracles G'd has performed, and through which He has demonstrated His sovereignty in all aspects of our lives.

Psalm 108

1. The Kabbalists explain the fact that we sometimes find the expression *mizmor ledavid* and sometimes *ledavid mizmor* (both meaning a hymn by David) as indicating that sometimes David had to await Divine inspiration before the could start (*ruach hakodesh*), and other times the Divine inspiration was already present before he began to compose the hymn. This *ruach hakodesh*, Divine inspiration is also known as the *ruach tzefonit*, the north wind, which the Talmud Berakhot 3 describes as often setting the harp of David playing by itself.

2. In this instance David's heart was tuned in awaiting G'd's inspiration, i.e. *urah hanevel*, wake up harp! The harp which has been playing at night has filled him with the holy spirit, *kevodi*, he wishes it will remain with him during the morning.

3. But what the Psalmist is asking is that in future he will be awakened by the holy spirit *a-irah shachar* so that he will be in a position to awaken the dawn, having been aroused by the holy spirit.

4. David says, – concerning the problems Israel experiences in

[5]*for Your faithfulness is higher than the heavens; Your steadfastness reaches to the sky.*
[6]*Exalt Yourself over the heavens, O God; let Your glory be over all the earth!*
[7]*That those whom You love may be rescued, deliver with Your right hand and answer me.*
[8]*God promised in His sanctuary that I would exultingly divide up Shechem, and measure the Valley of Sukkoth;*
[9]*Gilead and Manasseh would be mine, Ephraim my chief stronghold, Judah my scepter;*

exile – that he is certain that he will eventually give thanks to the Lord for the redemption from exile of the Jewish people among the nations (i.e. publicly), and that he will sing to G'd the Master of mercy among the nations. It is this vision which sustains him in his present problems. If he sounds plaintive now, this is only on account of the fate Israel is experiencing at present.

5. We have explained on Psalm 19 – based on the commentary of the book Rav Nissim – that the statement of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish in Chagigah 12 that there are 7 heavens has to be understood as follows: They are *vilon*, *rakiyah*, shechakim, *zevul*, *ma-on*, *machon* and *aravot*. The only function of *vilon* is to hide the light in the evening and reveal the light of the stars at night. (free translation)

Rakiyah contains the sun, moon and stars and the planets, whereas *shechakim* is already part of the celestial regions, containing the mills in which the manna is ground for the righteous. We have explained that the 7 *rekiyim* must not be equated with the 7 planets (fixed stars), but that all 9 planets including the sun and the moon are part of what is called *rakiyah*, i.e. part of the physical universe.

Shechakim is the "lowest" layer of the abstract, spiritual world. The "celestial temple" is found in the 4th of these *rekiyim*, i.e. in the layer called *zevul*. (The Talmud quotes scriptural proof that *zevul* is called *shamayim*.) David expresses his anguish at the length of the exile, – i.e. at the retreat of the *Shechinah*,Divine Presence to the heaven called *zevul*. *Yemincha* is G'd's attribute of *chessed* kindness. This has retreated beyond the layers in which the celestial representatives of people and forces of nature reside, so as not to interfere with their jurisdiction. Even the attribute of *emet* = *rachamim* mercy, has retreated and is as far removed from Israel now as the *shechakim*.

6. He wishes, – for the sake of the *Shechinah*, – that it had withdrawn not only from its counterpart on earth, i.e. the layer called

ה כִּי-גָדֹל מֵעַל-שָׁמַיִם חַסְדֶּךָ וְעַד-שְׁחָקִים אֲמִתֶּךָ׃
ו רוּמָה עַל-שָׁמַיִם אֱלֹהִים וְעַל כָּל-הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדֶךָ׃
ז לְמַעַן יֵחָלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וַעֲנֵנוּ׃
ח אֱלֹהִים דִּבֶּר בְּקָדְשׁוֹ אֶעֱלֹזָה אֲחַלְקָה שְׁכֶם וְעֵמֶק
סֻכּוֹת אֲמַדֵּד׃
ט לִי גִלְעָד לִי מְנַשֶּׁה וְאֶפְרַיִם מָעוֹז רֹאשִׁי יְהוּדָה
מְחֹקְקִי׃

zevul, but to the highest layer of heaven. This would have been more in keeping with *kevodcha*, the honour due You. At this point David has switched from his concern for his people, to his concern for the honour of G'd. In his view, the remnant of G'd's *Shechinah* at the Western Wall is not in keeping with the honour due G'd.

7. If Israel as a nation does not have any merit, he asks G'd to do so on account of the righteous people enduring exile, so that they at least can be rescued, i.e. *yedidecha*. Bring Your "right" back, i.e. Your attribute of *chessed*, kindness on account of Israel's enemies, and as is Your custom "answer me"!

8. I am not worried that I personally would not have a kingdom in the future, David says, but that only Menachem ben Amiel, of my descendants would rule, since G'd has assured me that I would exult and divide portions and that I would personally assign by measure the valley of Sukkot at the boundary of Eretz Yisrael. (Menachem ben Amiel is a pseudonym of the *mashiach ben Joseph*, who is supposed to be slain in a battle with the anti God king Arminus, based on gaonic literature. Arminus, name of a king mentioned already by Targum Yonathan ben Uziel, in Deut. 33.)

That Sukkot is rightfully ours is based on the prophecy (Genesis 15,18) "from the river of Egypt" i.e. Sukkot, an Egyptian border town as per Exodus 13,20. It was within the territory of Egypt, and at that time had not yet been annexed by Israel.

9. I have the merit of Elijah the prophet from Tishbi in the territory of Gilead to assist me. Should one argue that I suffer from the demerit of the king of Yehudah, Menashe, son of king Hezzekiah who laid waste the world by his sinful conduct, the fact is that Menashe's repentance was accepted, which turns him into an asset for me, i.e. *yesh li*. Even the sin of Jerobam son of Nevot, who has led Israel astray, will not be held against me, since Ephrayim is a strong support for my head, i.e. the *Mashiach ben Joseph*. (the accomplishments of

[10]Moab would be my washbasin; on Edom I would cast my shoe; I would raise a shout over Philistia.
[11]Would that I were brought to the bastion! Would that I were led to Edom!
[12]But You have rejected us, O God; God, You do not march with our armies.
[13]Grant us Your aid against the foe, for the help of man is worthless.
[14]With God we shall triumph; He will trample our foes.

the *Mashiach ben Joseph* a descendant of Ephrayim will offset the sins of Jerobam, who according to some will be re-incarnated as the *Mashiach ben Joseph*).

My own descent from Tamar, who played the role of harlot at *eynayim* (Genesis 38,14) will also not reflect discredit upon me, neither will the fact that I had a Moabite ancestor, i.e. Ruth, who had herself been descended from an incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughter. The fact that the tribe of Yehudah has been chosen as lawgiver in Israel (*Yehudah mechokeki*) i.e. the kings all come from the tribe of Yehudah, proves that my background is no disqualification, and has not been held against me.

10. Neither am I concerned about my connection with Moab, says David. This was like a washtub for me; any residual *zuhama*, pollutant remaining since Adam has been eliminated, washed out, and has attached itself to my Moabite ancestry so that MY soul already has been washed and purified. Since the prophet Samuel had first been taken aback at David's reddish appearance, (Samuel I 16,12) and could not imagine that this was the king that G'd had wanted him to anoint, G'd had to draw his attention to the *yephey eynayim*, (hyperbole for *Sanhedrin*, Jewish Supreme Court, i.e. eyes of the people) that David would not shed blood without the sanction of the *Sanhedrin* as opposed to Esau who acted arbitrarily when shedding blood. (compare Bereshit Rabbah 63)

The Psalmist therefore says that he need not worry about this initial reticence of the prophet Samuel to anoint him. So much for David's connection with Edom, Esau.

"I will be able to cast my shoe upon him", i.e. when I use bloodshed such as against Edom, it is merely like someone who uses a shoe, something peripheral, not part of one's character. I will do so only to avenge G'd's honour, and similarly, I will employ this talent to smash the Philistines.

י מוֹאָב סִיר רַחְצִי עַל-אֱדוֹם אַשְׁלִיךְ נַעֲלִי עָלֵי פְלֶשֶׁת
אֶתְרוֹעָע:
יא מִי יִבְלֵנִי עִיר מְבֻצָר מִי נָחָנִי עַד-אֱדוֹם:
יב הֲלֹא-אֱלֹהִים זְנַחְתָּנוּ וְלֹא-תֵצֵא אֱלֹהִים בְּצִבְאֹתֵינוּ:
יג הָבָה-לָּנוּ עֶזְרַת מִצָר וְשָׁוְא תְּשׁוּעַת אָדָם:
יד בֵּאלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה-חָיִל וְהוּא יָבוּס צָרֵינוּ:

12. Whence do I get my confidence to prevail over Amalek eventually, and also over the fortified city (Rome) which will be founded due to Solomon marrying the daughter of Pharaoh? (compare Sifri Parshat Eykev 18)

I gain this confidence from the fact that G'd has helped me to defeat Edom at this time! He who has led me to Edom NOW, will lead me to the fortified city (in the future).

12. The holy spirit answers as if Israel were speaking, and says "does this not mean that David will redeem us instead of You o G'd, who has forsaken us and does not go out to war with our armies"? Having said this, Israel re-considers, since it has had proof that Divine guidance had been available even while they were exiled in Babylonia. Hence, the complaint is re-phrased. Israel does not want G'd to employ the celestial creatures as His *merkavah*, entourage, but wants its own armies to serve as G'd's *merkavah*, as had been the case in former times. (after the Exodus)

13. Should G'd's response be that this all depends on Israel's merits, Israel replies that it is aware of the fact. Israel knows that G'd had already made Abraham His *merkavah*, and this had been due to the mastery Abraham had achieved over his *yetzer hara*, evil urge. The Bible has testified to this when it says (Nechemyah 9,8) "You have found his heart(s) *levavo* loyal before You". He was able to serve you with BOTH his urges. Israel asks G'd for help from *tzar*, i.e. the *yetzer hara*, its evil urge. The evil urge is the REAL enemy, and Israel requests G'd's help to become free from it. (similar to Deut. 5,26 "who would give that their hearts (both) be so that they revere Me... forever)

Our sages comment that at the time Israel should have expressed the wish that G'd HELP THEM maintain their lofty moral plateau. (Talmud Avodah Zorah 5) Now Israel is asking for what it had failed to ask for at that time.

14. Israel feels that since it is G'd's chosen people it is not enough that salvation should come through human hands, something

109 *For the leader. Of David. A psalm.*
O God of my praise, do not keep aloof,
2for the wicked and the deceitful open their mouth against me; they speak to me with lying tongue.
3They encircle me with words of hate; they attack me without cause.
4They answer my love with accusation and I must stand judgment.

ultimately futile, but that it should come directly from G'd. When that is the case, i.e. when our evil urge has been vanquished, *na-asseh chayil*, we will be able to perform valiantly, says Israel, because it is He who will tread down our oppressors. The *chayil* referred to may be the *cheyl melachim* the army of angels created by all the *mitzvot* which have been performed and which will make human armies superfluous when smashing our enemies.

Psalm 109

1. Our tradition sees in this Psalm the response by Israel to all that is happening to Israel during this long and bitter exile of Esau-Edom-Rome, and the Psalmist therefore reviews and refutes all the accusations and atrocities suffered beginning with Haman the wicked down to our present exile.

The author (Alshich) interprets Proverbs 17,26 (based on the Talmud Berakhot 7) that "it is not good for a *tzaddik* to cause punishments". Since the Psalmist departs from this rule by cursing Amalek, he needs to justify this conduct in the eys of G'd, so that G'd would not deny him Divine inspiration for this hymn. He begins to praise G'd by saying that what follows is a hymn and not a curse.

He emphasizes his own awareness that all his praises emanate from G'd, he wished G'd should not remain silent, i.e. not withhold His holy spirit from him...

2. The reason the Psalmist feels entitled to curse Amalek without forfeiting his entitlement to the *ruach hakodesh*, holy spirit is, that "they opened the mouth of wickedness and deceit against me". The speaker is the exiled nation of Israel, speaking in the singular saying that since the start of the exile of the Medes, i.e. the kingdom of Ahasverus, Edom, i.e. Haman began to harass Israel. Haman lumped all the Jews together and wanted to destroy them as if they were all one man.

Our sages said that both Ahasverus and Haman were great antisemites, Ahasverus being the greater of the two. (Esther Rabbah

קט א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר אֱלֹהֵי תְהִלָּתִי אַל-תֶּחֱרָשׁ:
ב כִּי פִי רָשָׁע וּפִי-מִרְמָה עָלַי פָּתָחוּ דִּבְּרוּ אִתִּי לְשׁוֹן שָׁקֶר:
ג וְדִבְרֵי שִׂנְאָה סְבָבוּנִי וַיִּלָּחֲמוּנִי חִנָּם:
ד תַּחַת-אַהֲבָתִי יִשְׂטְנוּנִי וַאֲנִי תְפִלָּה:

7,20). They consulted how to destroy Israel. They tricked Israel by inviting them to the feast Ahasverus had prepared to make them eat and drink forbidden foods and wines, to seat harlots across from them to trap them into sexual licentiousness. The Psalmist refers to the "mouth of the wicked", i.e. Ahasverus who cancelled the building permit for the second temple. (Talmud Megillah 11) The *pi mirmah*, the deceitful mouth, refers to Haman who tried to convince the Jews that he meant to honour them by the invitation. Also Ahasverus appeared to be complimentary, by pointing out that they had never before been invited to such a sumptuous feast. (Midrash Chazit)

3. In reality, they surrounded me with words of hatred, i.e. when I was not present they almost warred against me without provocation, *chinam*, by inciting all the nations to destroy me by murder.

4. They hated me because of my love (for G'd), and accused me of wasting money in honouring the Sabbaths and holidays through food purchases and through failing to work on those days. The accused me of hurting the economy. (Esther Rabbah 7,12) The archangel Michael (advocate of defense) told G'd that the sins the Jews were being accused of such as transgressing the Torah were in fact none other than that they observed the Jewish holidays out of love for their G'd. Because, the Psalmist says, I was aware that most of the accusations levelled against me were in fact due to my love for G'd, I did not take normal counter measures, but *va-ani tefillah*, relied on prayer. The reason the Psalmist says *va-ani* i.e. and I, instead of simply *ani*, I, is supplied by the Midrash.

Elijah assured Moses that G'd would not forsake Israel when the decree of Haman would come. To Moses' question whose merit would assist Israel at that time, Elijah told him it would be Mordechai. Moses told Elijah to tell Mordechai to use prayer at that time from his end, whereas he, Moses, would pray for Israel in the celestial regions. Hence we have the letter *vav* in the word *ve-ani*.

5. In exchange for my observances of the Sabbaths and holidays, the Persians accused me (Israel) as undermining the economy by overspending and not working enough. They used the fact that I did

5They repay me with evil for good, with hatred for my love.
6Appoint a wicked man over him; may an accuser stand at his right side;
7may he be tried and convicted; may he be judged and found guilty.
8May his days be few; may another take over his position.
9May his children be orphans, his wife a widow.
10May his children wander from their hovels, begging in search of [bread].
11May his creditor seize all his possessions; may strangers plunder his wealth.
12May no one show him mercy; may none pity his orphans;
13may his posterity be cut off; may their names be blotted out in the next generation.
14May God be ever mindful of his father's iniquity, and may the sin of his mother not be blotted out.

not drink wine that had been touched by a pagan (and thereby displayed my love for G'd and His commandments) to accuse me of disloyalty for not drinking wine which the king had touched, whereas I would drink the wine that a fly had fallen into. (Megillah 13)

6. David implored G'd to set a wicked person (Ahasverus) against Haman (the slanderer) and place Satan next to Ahasverus so he will turn into Haman's enemy.

7. When the king deliberated if to sentence Haman to death, – Haman's prayer, i.e. his attempt to plead for his life with Esther (Esther 7,8) was misinterpreted by Ahasverus as an attempt to rape her. Also Charvonah reported on the gallows Haman had built to hang Mordechai. (Esther 7,9)

8. Haman lived only a few days after the decree against the Jews had been sent out (on the 13th of Nissan). He was hanged on the 16th of Nissan. His position should be occupied by another, i.e. Mordechai.

9. "May his sons become orphans and his wife a widow", refers to the period of 11 months between the time Haman was hung (16th Nissan) and his sons were hung (13th Adar following). During that period, Haman's family had been denied access to his estate. The Talmud Baba Metzia 38 has interpreted Exodus 22,23 *vehayu* as

ה וַיָּשִׂימוּ עָלַי רָעָה תַּחַת טוֹבָה וְשִׂנְאָה תַּחַת אַהֲבָתִי׃
ו הַפְקֵד עָלָיו רָשָׁע וְשָׂטָן יַעֲמֹד עַל-יְמִינוֹ׃
ז בְּהִשָּׁפְטוֹ יֵצֵא רָשָׁע וּתְפִלָּתוֹ תִּהְיֶה לַחֲטָאָה׃
ח יִהְיוּ-יָמָיו מְעַטִּים פְּקֻדָּתוֹ יִקַּח אַחֵר׃
ט יִהְיוּ-בָנָיו יְתוֹמִים וְאִשְׁתּוֹ אַלְמָנָה׃
י וְנוֹעַ יָנוּעוּ בָנָיו וְשִׁאֲלוּ וְדָרְשׁוּ מֵחָרְבוֹתֵיהֶם׃
יא יְנַקֵּשׁ נוֹשֶׁה לְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וְיָבֹזּוּ זָרִים יְגִיעוֹ׃
יב אַל-יְהִי-לוֹ מֹשֵׁךְ חָסֶד וְאַל-יְהִי חוֹנֵן לְיִתוֹמָיו׃
יג יְהִי-אַחֲרִיתוֹ לְהַכְרִית בְּדוֹר אַחֵר יִמַּח שְׁמָם׃
יד יִזָּכֵר עֲוֹן אֲבֹתָיו אֶל-יְהוָה וְחַטַּאת אִמּוֹ אַל-תִּמָּח׃

meaning that due to the absence of witnesses, the widow cannot re-marry, and the sons cannot inherit the father's estate. The is part of the Psalmist's prayer of what should happen to Haman.

10. Hence, Haman's surviving sons would have to beg for food and shelter and search vainly amongst the ruins of their father's house. The Talmud Megillah 15 reports Haman as having had 30 sons, 10 of whom were hanged. The Psalmist prays concerning 10 sons that they should die from hunger and 10 others who died naturally. (Other versions report Haman as having had 70 or even 214 sons respectively, the number 214 equalling the numerical value of *verov* in the line of "and his many sons".)

11. According to the view of our sages (metargem??) Haman had once been sold in war as a slave to Mordechai for debts owed, – hence Mordechai is here described as his creditor. Haman's OTHER possessions were plundered so that his sons did not inherit anything from their father.

12. The Psalmist prays that neither Haman nor his sons should become the beneficiaries of any kindness Haman had ever performed for anyone in his life.

13. May their end be so final that in subsequent generations even their very names would not be remembered.

14. But the sins of his ancestor Amalek/Esau should be remembered before G'd, so that he should not be able to wipe out the offspring of Rebeccah, who should also have been the mother of 12 tribes, had she not said (Genesis 25,22) "if so, i.e. if I have to suffer like this in every pregnancy, better I had not been born".

15May the LORD be aware of them always and cause their names to be cut off from the earth,
16because he was not minded to act kindly, and hounded to death the poor and needy man, one crushed in spirit.
17He loved to curse— may a curse come upon him!
He would not bless—may blessing be far from him!
18May he be clothed in a curse like a garment, may it enter his body like water, his bones like oil.
19Let it be like the cloak he wraps around him, like the belt he always wears.
20May the LORD thus repay my accusers, all those who speak evil against me.
21Now You, O God, my Lord, act on my behalf as befits Your name.
Good and faithful as You are, save me.
22For I am poor and needy, and my heart is pierced within me.

(Bereshit Rabbah 63,6) This exclamation of Rebeccah's had been wrung from her through Esau's behaviour in her womb.

15. Not only should this sin be remembered, – but it should remain constantly before G'd's eyes to act as accuser until his descendants have been wiped out from earth's memory.

16. This because Esau never repaid Jacob's kindness when the latter gave him the dish of lentils when Esau was tired and on the point of death. (Genesis 25,30–34) Instead of being grateful, he persecuted *ish ani voevyon*, i.e. Jacob.

17. Should you counter by saying that Jacob took Esau's blessing, this is no argument. Esau had loved "the curse", and had demonstrated this by choosing the life on this earth when he and Jacob divided the world between them. He had chosen death, spurned the world to come. (Genesis 25,32, according to Baba Batra 16) This is why *vatirchak memenu* the blessing remained far from him.

18. However, this incident was not the SOLE cause for his death in the hereafter; rather since birth he had made *kellalah*, curse his uniform. The reference is to his reddish appearance already at birth, (Genesis 25,25) which Pessikta ascribes to his having absorbed Rebeccah's menstrual blood. *Aderet seyor* is a way of saying he entered the world as if dressed in anger and had the urge to judge others. Water is absorbed through the body, oil through the skin. Esau had absorbed all the pollutant of his mother (which had been

טו יִהְיוּ נֶגֶד-יְהוָה תָּמִיד וְיַכְרֵת מֵאֶרֶץ זִכְרָם:
טז יַעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא-זָכַר עֲשׂוֹת חֶסֶד וַיִּרְדֹּף אִישׁ-עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן וְנִכְאֵה לֵבָב לְמוֹתֵת:
יז וַיֶּאֱהַב קְלָלָה וַתְּבוֹאֵהוּ וְלֹא-חָפֵץ בִּבְרָכָה וַתִּרְחַק מִמֶּנּוּ:
יח וַיִּלְבַּשׁ קְלָלָה כְּמַדּוֹ וַתָּבֹא כַמַּיִם בְּקִרְבּוֹ וְכַשֶּׁמֶן בְּעַצְמוֹתָיו:
יט תְּהִי-לוֹ כְּבֶגֶד יַעְטֶה וּלְמֵזַח תָּמִיד יַחְגְּרֶהָ:
כ זֹאת פְּעֻלַּת שׂטָנַי מֵאֵת יְהוָה וְהַדֹּבְרִים רָע עַל-נַפְשִׁי:
כא וְאַתָּה יֱהוִה אֲדֹנָי עֲשֵׂה-אִתִּי לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ כִּי-טוֹב חַסְדְּךָ הַצִּילֵנִי:
כב כִּי-עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן אָנֹכִי וְלִבִּי חָלַל בְּקִרְבִּי:

her share of the pollutants of all women, bequeathed by Eve due to her having eaten from the tree of knowledge, see our commentary on Parshat Bereshit).

Not only did Esau not feel the urge to strive for something higher, but he was so permeated with these materialistic influences that he wallowed in them, i.e. it was in his very *atzomot*, bones.

19. My curse is that since he wears these attributes of Satan in order to act as a whip against Israel, that they should become an integral part of himself, and he should gird himself with them forever, unable to divest himself of them.

20. Even though Esau's hatred etc. is really the work of the *saro shel Esav* i.e. stems from Samael, the force of evil G'd has placed in the world, and though all those who speak evilly against me are really only the accusers which my own sins have created, nonetheless I am confident that they will not overcome me but will boomerang,

21. and that You O G'd will save me for the sake of Your name which has been desecrated amongst the pagans, though I am aware it will have to be because of Your kindness, not because of my worthiness.

22. Though it is a known fact that a poor person is considered AS IF he were dead, (Zohar 2,119) I myself, due to my existence in exile,

23I fade away like a lengthening shadow; I am shaken
off like locusts.
24My knees give way from fasting; my flesh is lean, has
lost its fat.
25I am the object of their scorn; when they see me, they
shake their head.
26Help me, O LORD, my God; save me in accord with
Your faithfulness
27that men may know that it is Your hand, that You, O
LORD, have done it.
28Let them curse, but You bless; let them rise up, but
come to grief, while Your servant rejoices.
29My accusers shall be clothed in shame, wrapped in
their disgrace as in a robe.
30My mouth shall sing much praise to the LORD; I will
acclaim Him in the midst of a throng,

my heart is actually slain within me, i.e. the organ that animates the rest of my body. I am in worse position even than the ordinary *ani ve-evyon*, destitute, I am actually dead.

23. I am so tender and faint that I could not even flee taking big steps, but just as a shadow which inclines slowly, almost imperceptibly, so I was forced to walk slowly like a person going for a leisurely walk. Meanwhile I was tossed about like a locust (i.e. many times its own size) from Jerusalem to Rome.

24. Having been really spoiled previously, my knees are weak from fasting, my flesh is lean, has no more fat. Whereas normally people lose EXCESS fat, in my case the leanness extends already to the flesh itself, since the flesh itself had been fatty.

25. Whereas I used to be a disgrace to the nations before my exile, now I am an even greater disgrace, so that they do not even bother to talk about it, and merely shake their heads when they see me.

26. Since I am practically dead, but have reached the stage where I call upon You as my G'd, please save me as an act of kindness!

27. May this help demonstrate to mankind that it is Your hand that has done it, that has put me in exile, and that this had not been due to the strength of the gentile nations!

28. You can do this by letting them curse, whereas You bless; by letting them rise against me whereas You put them to shame and Your servant will rejoice.

כג כְּצֵל כְּנָטוֹתוֹ נֶהֱלָכְתִּי נִנְעַרְתִּי כָּאַרְבֶּה:
כד בִּרְכַּי כָּשְׁלוּ מִצּוֹם וּבְשָׂרִי כָחַשׁ מִשֶּׁמֶן:
כה וַאֲנִי הָיִיתִי חֶרְפָּה לָהֶם יִרְאוּנִי יְנִיעוּן רֹאשָׁם:
כו עָזְרֵנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהָי הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי כְחַסְדֶּךָ:
כז וְיֵדְעוּ כִּי-יָדְךָ זֹאת אַתָּה יְהוָה עָשִׂיתָהּ:
כח יְקַלְלוּ-הֵמָּה וְאַתָּה תְּבָרֵךְ קָמוּ וַיֵּבֹשׁוּ וְעַבְדְּךָ יִשְׂמָח:
כט יִלְבְּשׁוּ שׁוֹטְנַי כְּלִמָּה וְיַעֲטוּ כַמְעִיל בָּשְׁתָּם:
ל אוֹדֶה יְהוָה מְאֹד בְּפִי וּבְתוֹךְ רַבִּים אֲהַלְלֶנּוּ:

29. Then my adversaries will clothe themselves in shame because of all the evil they used to do to me, just as the emperor Nero felt ashamed when a small boy quoted Ezekiel 25,14. The Talmud Gittin 56, records that when Nero Caesar had heard that the Jews had failed to offer a blemished animal on their altar on his behalf, he came and shot arrows in each direction. Each of these arrows wound up facing Jerusalem. He took this as an omen that he would defeat Israel. He then asked a small youngster to recite the verse of scripture that boy had studied that day. The child quoted the above verse from Ezekiel, "I will lay My vengeance upon Edom by the hands of My people Israel, etc."

The emperor concluded that whereas G'd wanted His temple destroyed, He at the same time would avenge Himself on the destroyer. As a result, the emperor fled, converted to Judaism and became an ancestor of the famous Rabbi Meir.

The Psalmist says here, that even if our enemies will not PUBLICLY declare that they have sinned against us, they will however, be ashamed privately and wear their shame like an outer coat, i.e. they will cease to speak out against us.

30. This will already be enough for me to thank the Lord with my mouth. But as long as the nations have not realized that Your hand has done all this, I have not dared open my mouth to thank G'd publicly for fear the nations would mock me, resulting in a desecration of G'd's holy name. But NOW when You G'd will do all this... they will recognize that You are with us and will be shamed.

Another approach: Though I have not yet been redeemed, I thank G'd for the fact that His name is still constantly in my mouth; I do so publicly without worrying that I will be made fun of by the nations – to show that I have not become fed up with my fate, i.e. the lengthy exile.

31*because He stands at the right hand of the needy, to save him from those who would condemn him.*

110 *Of David. A psalm.*
The LORD said to my lord, "Sit at My right hand while I make your enemies your footstool."
2*The LORD will stretch forth from Zion your mighty scepter; hold sway over your enemies!*

31. The reason I do so is because I realize that the purpose of my exile is to save my soul from purgatory through the suffering of my body. (collectively speaking) G'd, i.e. in the form of exile, will stand at my right side, *ya-amod liyemin evyon.* This is to support me against all the cravings for material blessings denied me in exile. Our sages in Berakhot 6 say that the verse in Psalm 91,7 "one thousand will fall by your left side, and ten thousand by your right side" refers to the destructive agents that adhere to man during his life, and are trying to waylay him. It is noteworthy that the one thousand are describes as being on man's left side, whereas the ten thousand are described as on his right side. I believe that the holier side of man, his spiritual side, the right side attracts more potential pitfalls for him than the more materially minded left side.

The Talmud describes the fact that scholars' garments wear out quickly (despite the fact that they are not involved doing physical labour) as due to the rubbing against them of the *mazikim*, these destructive agents of G'd. The Talmud then states that it is only our inability to actually see these *mazikim* which enables us to carry on as if they did not exist. (Berakhot 6) The *shoftey nefesh*, the ones who judge a person, are the negative forces created by our sins, which, but for exile would cause us to be sentenced to purgatory, and from which exile saves us, i.e. *ya-amod lehoshia.*

Psalm 110

1. The Talmud Sanhedrin 108 tells about Shem the son of Noah asking Eliezer, Abraham's servant how Abraham had managed to defeat the 4 mightiest kings and their armies. (Genesis 14,14–15) Eliezer said that G'd had simply told Abraham to sit on His right side etc.

It sounds strange that David should compose a Psalm concerning this event, since he does not seem to have had any connection with

לא כִּי-יַעֲמֹד לִימִין אֶבְיוֹן לְהוֹשִׁיעַ מִשֹּׁפְטֵי נַפְשׁוֹ׃

קי א לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר נְאֻם יְהוָה לַאדֹנִי שֵׁב לִימִנִי עַד-אָשִׁית
אֹיְבֶיךָ הֲדֹם לְרַגְלֶיךָ׃
ב מַטֵּה עֻזְּךָ יִשְׁלַח יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן רְדֵה בְּקֶרֶב אֹיְבֶיךָ׃

it whatsoever. I believe therefore, (words of the Alshich) that the incident inspired David to trust in G'd and to be confident of the future redemption G'd would bring for him, i.e. that he would be the Messiah.

The fact that Abraham defeated 4 kings was a hint that G'd would deliver the 4 kingdoms who have ruled over Israel at different times into their hands, as is written (Daniel 2,35) "then the iron, the earthenware, the copper the silver and the gold were crumbled together". This is a reference to the 4 kingdoms. We can prove this from the statement in Bereshit Rabbah 42,2 where we read that Amrafel king of Shinor refers to Babylonia; Aryach king of Alassar refers to the kingdom of the Medes; Kedorlaomer king of Elam, refers to the Greeks, and Tidal king of Goyim refers to Edom, i.e. Rome.

All this is difficult to accept, since Esau the founder of Edom had not been born yet at the time Abraham went to war against the above named 4 kings.

How then can the names of these 4 kings and what happened to them provide the *remez*, hint regarding future antagonists of Israel and their defeat?

Actually, we must perceive these 4 kings as having been designated by G'd as symbolic forerunners of the 4 kingdoms that would rule over Israel when the latter are in exile, and their defeat by Abraham is to be seen as encouragement for David that the 4 kingdoms of the future would likewise be defeated.

The counterparts of these 4 kings, i.e. their *sarim* in the celestial spheres (since the 4 kings themselves are said not to have been killed by Abraham), and these same *sarim*, celestial representatives would continue to function as the 4 *sarim* of the 4 kingdoms which would rule over Israel at various times. Daniel 2,34 would then describe how the ultimate destruction of these kingdoms would be an act of G'd, and David, i.e. the Messiah would merely be an onlooker, much as what Eliezer had described to Shem in the passage from Sanhedrin we have quoted.

David, owing to his holy spirit had become aware of the

[3]Your people come forward willingly on your day of battle.
In majestic holiness, from the womb, from the dawn, yours was the dew of youth.
[4]The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever, a rightful king by My decree."
[5]The Lord is at your right hand.
He crushes kings in the day of His anger.
[6]He works judgment upon the nations, heaping up bodies, crushing heads far and wide.
[7]He drinks from the stream on his way; therefore he holds his head high.

significance of this and this had inspired him *ledavid mizmor*, that it was fitting for him to compose this hymn extolling G'd who had told Abraham to sit on His right side while He made a footstool of Abraham's enemies.

2. G'd also said to Abraham "G'd will send the rod of your might forth from Zion etc." i.e. that Abraham's ability to defeat the 4 kings described in Parshat Lech lecha was due to the Messiah the Lord would send in the future. This is why already now the words "attain dominion over your enemies" are inspirational. (in line with what we explained in verse 1)

3. G'd is reassuring Abraham that he should not be afraid because he numbered so few warriors; they are all *nedavot*, i.e. his assistants consist of his good deeds and his good intentions. G'd considers good intentions leading to good deeds as good deeds in themselves.

On the day of *cheylecha*, your battle, you will be accompanied by all these angels that have been created by your good deeds, and which are beautiful in their holiness, *behadrey kodesh*. You do not need those to protect yourself from enemies, though, since according to our sources Abraham's very birth aroused enmity, and he had to live underground for the first 11 years of his life. This was possible only because G'd provided him with *tal*, dew, i.e. the very dew G'd will use in the future to re-surrect the dead. (All of this is described in greater detail in the Sefer Hayashar on Parshat Noach, pages 24–26.)

4. All the people Abraham is reported to have slain were actually slain by G'd, since a priest who has killed a human being can no longer officiate as priest, whereas (Abraham) you were appointed as priest for all time to replace Malki Tzedek who erred when he acknowledged the accomplishment of Abraham before giving credit

ג עַמְּךָ נְדָבֹת בְּיוֹם חֵילֶךָ בְּהַדְרֵי-קֹדֶשׁ מֵרֶחֶם מִשְׁחָר
לְךָ טַל יַלְדֻתֶךָ:
ד נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִנָּחֵם אַתָּה-כֹהֵן לְעוֹלָם עַל-דִּבְרָתִי
מַלְכִּי-צֶדֶק:
ה אֲדֹנָי עַל-יְמִינְךָ מָחַץ בְּיוֹם-אַפּוֹ מְלָכִים:
ו יָדִין בַּגּוֹיִם מָלֵא גְוִיוֹת מָחַץ רֹאשׁ עַל-אֶרֶץ רַבָּה:
ז מִנַּחַל בַּדֶּרֶךְ יִשְׁתֶּה עַל-כֵּן יָרִים רֹאשׁ:

to G'd. (Genesis 14,19–20) This is the meaning of the plural ending *al divrati* instead of *al davar* at the end of this verse.

5. It was *a-do-nay*, G'd, not you Abraham who smashed the heads of kings on the days of His anger; i.e. the *Shechinah* on your right hand side. All that you seemed to be doing, He actually did.

6. Since You G'd had done so for Abraham in the past, You will certainly do so in the future when G'd enacts judgment amongst the nations, *mole geviyot* full of bodies. Our sages say that G'd has a purple cloak on which is inscribed the name of each Jew whom the gentiles have killed. The reason they are referred to as *geviyot*, when it is the soul that is inscribed on that cloak is, that some may have been killed several times over due to their souls having transmigrated and lived in different re-incarnations. The gentiles, however, believed that they had killed several lives, i.e. *geviyot* (plural).

What the Psalmist is saying is that if even in the days of Abraham – when these nations had not yet been guilty of killing righteous people, G'd reacted in such a fashion, being on Abraham's right, once the nations have added the guilt of killing the righteous, G'd who keeps track of these killings, i.e. the purple coat inscribed with the list of the murdered, will smash the head of their *Sar*, celestial representative first. Afterwards *al eretz rabah*, their terrestrial leader, such as Titus whose brain was devoured by a fly.

7. After He has smashed the celestial representative, He is thirsty to slake His thirst below on earth. This is what is meant by Isaiah 34,6 "the sword of G'd is full of blood, My sword which is bathed in heaven will descend on Edom... the sword of the Lord is full of blood". He will accomplish this by means of David the Messiah, whose head He will raise, i.e. *yarim rosh*. (The Psalmist uses the word *cherev*, sword to show that in this instance G'd employs an agent, i.e. the Messiah.)

111 *Hallelujah.*
I praise the LORD with all my heart in the assembled congregation of the upright.
2The works of the LORD are great, within reach of all who desire them.

Psalm 111

1. The general tenor of this hymn is praise to the Lord who created two worlds, the spiritual and the physical one. The material world is not to be regarded lightly, since it is in this physical world that one acquires one's entitlement to life in the spiritual world.

The Psalmist wants to refute those who would question the value of our physical world, claiming it would have been better to have only the world of angels etc. who constantly praise G'd, instead of creating the creatures in this world whom G'd has no need of.

We have explained the statement of our sages in Berakhot 17 that "in the hereafter there is no eating and drinking etc., but the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads", to mean that the stature of these *tzaddikim* righteous ones is greater than that of the malachey *hasharet* the angels that serve G'd on an ongoing basis. These angels do not have times during which they perform service for the Lord and other times during which they can repose, rather they are kept active performing tasks for G'd around the clock, so to speak.

This is why these angels cannot be described as "seated", they are always in a "standing" position, just like a student in front of a teacher. The righteous however, perform their service while in this physical universe and repose in the hereafter.

The reason for all this is that man who has to contend with a *yetzer hara* an evil urge and who has to conquer it in this world, has been assigned his reward int he hereafter. The crowns represent the mitzvot, meritorious deeds he has performed in this world, they are his very own since he had to conquer his evil urge to acquire them.

The service the angels perform are not credited to them in a similar fashion, since angels do not have to overcome internal opposition to carry out their Creator's wishes, not having a yetzer hara. It follows that man has acquired two worlds due to the composition of our physical world.

The Psalmist addresses us saying "praise the 2 lettered name of G'd, the one who created BOTH worlds, the physical one with the letter *heh* and the spiritual one with the letter *yud*".

Do not belittle this world; here, I, the human being give thanks to the Lord for the fact that I have two urges, and not only the *yetzer*

קיא א הַלְלוּיָהּ אוֹדֶה יְהוָה בְּכָל-לֵבָב בְּסוֹד יְשָׁרִים וְעֵדָה:
ב גְּדֹלִים מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה דְּרוּשִׁים לְכָל-חֶפְצֵיהֶם:

hatov, good urge, like the angels. My life spans three distinct periods. 1)The present world, 2)the world of the disembodied in the hereafter, 3)the world after the resurrection, when my body regains its soul. I do not only thank the Lord in THIS world in which I have grown up, but also *be-sod yesharim*, in the realm of the upright, i.e. the world of the angels, and also subsequently *ba-eydah*, as part of the community of Israel after the resurrection.

2. Do not query how it is possible to acquire one's claim to the spiritual world through the physical world.

A look at our physical world, i.e. earth and the galaxies, reveals how much G'd has concerned Himself with attention to detail when He created same. At first glance we would consider it below G'd's dignity to be preoccupied with all the trivia He personally attended to. However, if He did so, this can only prove that He considered this physical universe as of the greatest importance.

At the very least, the significance of all these details lies in the fact that their existence enables G'd's will to be done eventually.

Even though grain, bread and other foods that the earth produces, as well as the water that man drinks, are purely material, without any spiritual content, – when man uses them to enable him to perform their purpose in the manner G'd wants him to, i.e. if man eats and drinks in order to maintain his body to fulfil G'd's commandments, – all these merely physical items serve a higher purpose.

Hence, it is *gedolim ma-assey hashem*, all these *maasim*, materialized worlds of G'd are *gedolim*, great!

Since there is no item in this physical world which cannot serve as the vehicle to help man acquire a claim on the spiritual world, nothing in this world is insignificant. Everything is *derushim lechol cheftzeyhem*, required in order to fulfil the wish of their Maker.

3. Proof of the importance of this physical universe is the care G'd took to wrap Himself in 10 layers of garments including a layer called *hod vehadar* as we know from Pessikta 10, quoting *hod vehadar lavashta* (Psalm 104,1). You draped Yourself in beauty and majesty. This teaches that though the world itself was physical, it came into existence by means of the "garment" (emanation) called *hod*, majesty.

This is why the Psalmist says "He created it in beauty and majesty".

Vetzidkato omedet la-ad. The *tzaddik*, righteous receives his

3His deeds are splendid and glorious; His beneficence is everlasting;
4He has won renown for His wonders.
The LORD is gracious and compassionate;
5He gives food to those who fear Him; He is ever mindful of His covenant.
6He revealed to His people His powerful works, in giving them the heritage of nations.
7His handiwork is truth and justice; all His precepts are enduring,
8well-founded for all eternity, wrought of truth and equity.
9He sent redemption to His people; He ordained His covenant for all time; His name is holy and awesome.

reward in the hereafter, since only there can his reward be of an everlasting nature.

An alternative approach is this. The Psalmist extols Israel's righteous merits vis a vis the *malachey hasharet*, the angels, by saying that G'd created 2 worlds for them, whereas He created only one world for the angels.

The latter can never serve Him in the physical world – nor receive reward in their own world. The reason for our eminence is that we can thank the Lord *bechol leyvav*, with BOTH hearts, i.e. the *yetzer hara* and the *yetzer hatov*. The nations mock us by saying that Israel has nothing to brag about, seeing no other nation has been humbled as we have been humbled, and how could someone who claims that the world has been created for his sake be so downtrodden?

Besides, since our holydays are in commemoration of such events as the Exodus, – it appears that this was the ultimate we had to look forward to! Even the silver and gold that Israel took out of Egypt has been stolen, that wealth Israel had not been granted, neither was the land of Canaan given to Israel but Israel acquired it be war of aggression! How then can Israel claim such eminence, is what the gentiles ask?

To all this the Psalmist answers: 1)If you see us in a downtrodden and helpless condition in this world, this is of no consequence, since our righteousness will be recognized *la-ad*, in a world of eternal duration, a world created by beauty and majesty, i.e. a world infused with spiritual values through the "garment" G'd wore when He created it. The reward He grants is itself an act of kindness, and is received

ג הוֹד-וְהָדָר פָּעָלוֹ וְצִדְקָתוֹ עֹמֶדֶת לָעַד:
ד זֵכֶר עָשָׂה לְנִפְלְאֹתָיו חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם יְהוָה:
ה טֶרֶף נָתַן לִירֵאָיו יִזְכֹּר לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ:
ו כֹּחַ מַעֲשָׂיו הִגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ לָתֵת לָהֶם נַחֲלַת גּוֹיִם:
ז מַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיו אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט נֶאֱמָנִים כָּל-פִּקּוּדָיו:
ח סְמוּכִים לָעַד לְעוֹלָם עֲשׂוּיִם בֶּאֱמֶת וְיָשָׁר:
ט פְּדוּת שָׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ צִוָּה לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ קָדוֹשׁ וְנוֹרָא שְׁמוֹ:

in celestial spheres just as *levusho* His garment is part of the celestial regions.

4. Not the Exodus itself was the highlight of our existence, it only serves to remind us of G'd's mercy and grace.

5. Concerning the accusation that we stole the Egyptians' wealth, G'd gave it as a gift to His people. The amount of silver taken is not even one tenth of one percent of the value of the forced labour performed for Egypt during the many years of bondage. G'd did this only to demonstrate that He remembers His covenant forever. (the promise to Abraham in Genesis 15,14) Moses had to plead with the people to ask for these silver trinkets. (Exodus 11,2)

6. He GAVE the inheritance which had been intended ever since the creation of the universe. (compare Rashi on Genesis 1,1).

7. On the contrary, Israel's taking possession of the land occupied by the Canaanites proves *ma-assey yadav emet* that the true objective of creating the universe had been fulfilled, and *mishpat*, that the measure of depravity of the people on that soil had finally reached the point where their destruction or expulsion had become an act of *mishpat*, justice.

Should you say that this cannot be proven since the land had also been taken away from Israel, the proof lies in the fact that *ne-emanim kol pikudav*, that as long as Israel was loyal to G'd's commandments they remained on the land, they lost it only once they had become disloyal to G'd.

8. As long as they carried out G'd's commandments in truth and uprightness, *semuchim la-ad*, they enjoyed G'd's support constantly.

9. He even gave the Jewish people *pedut*, freedom from the angel of death and from servitude to the nations on earth, as our sages explain the word *charut* as *cherut*, (Exodus 32,16) that the gift of the

10The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the LORD; all who practice it gain sound understanding.
Praise of Him is everlasting.

112

Hallelujah.
Happy is the man who fears the LORD, who is ardently devoted to His commandments.
2His descendants will be mighty in the land, a blessed generation of upright men.

tablets with the ten commandments was accompanied by this dual freedom. (Talmud Eyruvin 54)

By commanding His covenant *brito*, i.e. the Torah, He gave the chance of eternal life to Israel in this universe, i.e. *le-olam*. (compare Jeremiah 33,25 "were it not for My covenant – I would not have created day and night".)

His name is called *kadosh venora*, holy and awe inspiring in His people, – because of the Torah he gave to his people. The "holiness" that becomes part of Israel is contingent on Israel observing G'd's covenant. A holy nation is free from the angel of death, and *nora*, awesome, because all the nations are in awe of Israel.

Traditionally, the destruction of the first temple is considered as due to non-observance of the law of circumcision and the neglect of Torah study. The idol worship, G'd had overlooked for a lengthy period, whereas He could not overlook the other 2 cardinal sins, as explained in Midrash Rabbah on Lamentations. () The Midrash there describes Abraham as entering the temple on the eve of the 9th of Av, immediately before its destruction, pleading with G'd not to allow the temple to be destroyed, G'd's final argument was *u-bassar kodesh ya-avru me-olecha*, (Jeremiah 11,15), they failed to observe *brit milah*, circumcision. Abraham had argued that G'd could not allow a people to become slaves to human beings when these people wore the stamp of G'd's covenant on their very flesh, i.e. *bassar kodesh*. G'd's reply had been that, alas, this was no longer the case.

From the above we see that the observance of the *mitzvah* of circumcision is central to Jewish national independence. It guarantees *pedut*, freedom.

10. Concerning the other sin, i.e. the neglect of Torah study, which contributed to the destruction of the temple and the exile of the Jewish people, the Psalmist says that "the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord". This means that Torah study FOLLOWS fear of the

רֵאשִׁית חָכְמָה יִרְאַת יְהוָה שֵׂכֶל טוֹב לְכָל-עֹשֵׂיהֶם
תְּהִלָּתוֹ עֹמֶדֶת לָעַד:

קיב א הַלְלוּיָהּ אַשְׁרֵי-אִישׁ יָרֵא אֶת-יְהוָה בְּמִצְוֹתָיו חָפֵץ
מְאֹד:
ב גִּבּוֹר בָּאָרֶץ יִהְיֶה זַרְעוֹ דּוֹר יְשָׁרִים יְבֹרָךְ:

Lord and will LEAD to *osseyhem*, that the Torah laws will be performed as a result of study. It will be *seychel tov*, not just human wisdom. It will be recognized by the nations as the *tehillah*, the fame of G'd's people which will endure forever and who will not need to be exiled.

Psalm 112

1. David teaches the people not to serve the Lord for the sake of the reward that this world can bestow, but for the love of the reward awaiting in the hereafter. This is why he says *hallelu y-a-ah* i.e. the Lord who has created 2 worlds, using the name *yud heh*. This is so that when one praises the Lord, one praises Him who has created the world for the sake of Israel. However, *ashrey*, i.e. truly happy is only the person who reveres the 4 lettered name of G'd if *yare*, he reveres the Lord by not transgressing the negative commandments, and who also observes the positive commandments, i.e. *mitzvotav chafetz*. Such a person is happy when his motivation is not the reward he will receive – although that reward is assured, of course.

2. Here the Psalmist paraphrases Jeremiah 9,23, "let not the powerful boast of his strength, the wise boast with his wisdom or the rich with his wealth, – but let him that wishes to glory, boast of the fact that he knows Me who am the Lord performing kindness and justice, etc."

The only man who truly has reason to be described as *ashrey*, happy, is the latter.

The Psalmist first describes the *gibor*, the physically strong. Even the martial hero who has succeeded in raising a family of physically powerful and fearless children has accomplished nothing unless this heroism is employed *dor yesharim yevorach* to lead the generation on the right path. They are not to suppress the weak, though able to do so, they will be blessed *yevorach*, for the *yosher* their upright conduct. Their true *osher* happiness does not lie in the excessive use of brute force.

3Wealth and riches are in his house, and his beneficence lasts forever.
4A light shines for the upright in the darkness; he is gracious, compassionate, and beneficent.
5All goes well with the man who lends generously, who conduct his affairs with equity.

3. The second category mentioned (the third in Jeremiah) i.e. material wealth *osher*, is also addressed by the Psalmist. Material wealth not only is not by itself a source of *osher* (happiness), but it is inferior to physical prowess, since it is not integral to man, is not part of him. Our sages (Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 34) interpret Isaiah 58,8 "your righteousness will walk before you", by a parable. Man has 3 friends. They are his children, his money and his good deeds. When he dies, he leaves his money at home; his children accompany him to his graveside, whereas only his good deeds precede him to the hereafter.

The Psalmist refers to the material wealth which man leaves behind in his house. This is why Jeremiah said "let not man boast of his wealth", since it is confined to his house, since he cannot take it with him.

His righteousness however, remains with him forever, i.e. precedes him as per Isaiah 58,8.

Not only that, but while one keeps one's wealth *beveyto* in one's house it does not do anyone any good. It is truly *hon*, useful wealth, only when one spends it for the right purpose such as feeding the hungry, helping the sick, etc.

Money is only a MEANS to perform good deeds, it has no inherent value. This is why the Psalmist refers to *tzidkato* HIS *tzedakah*, i.e. after the input of the individual who owns it, it can become *tzedakah*, but not by itself.

4. Also the *chochmah*, the wisdom, intelligence, mentioned in Jeremiah is nothing but an attribute, though it does not have the failings of material wealth. It is only the product of *chochmah* which leads to true *osher*, i.e. if as a result of *chochmah*, its owner has become a *yare et Hashem*, someone who truly reveres G'd. When the wise man not only observes G'd's laws but trains others to do so also, then his wisdom becomes meaningful, i.e. *zarach bechoshech or la-yesharim*, he shines light in the dark for the upright.

Concerning the teaching of Torah, there are three distinct levels. 1)To instruct the totally ignorant, to work in areas where Torah is simply absent. By doing this, one ensures that Torah will not be

ג הוֹן-וָעֹשֶׁר בְּבֵיתוֹ וְצִדְקָתוֹ עֹמֶדֶת לָעַד:
ד זָרַח בַּחֹשֶׁךְ אוֹר לַיְשָׁרִים חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם וְצַדִּיק:
ה טוֹב-אִישׁ חוֹנֵן וּמַלְוֶה יְכַלְכֵּל דְּבָרָיו בְּמִשְׁפָּט:

totally forgotten amongst the Jewish people. 2)A higher level of teaching is achieved when such teaching is not merely functional, i.e. instruction in the mechanics of observing Torah precepts, but when the teacher is imbued with a pure heart, when his own dedication to Torah values communicates itself to his students. 3)When the teacher is careful to select suitable students, as our sages have emphasized frequently, Torah learning can achieve still higher levels.

All three levels are hinted at in our verse. Concerning the first situation, the Psalmist says *zarach bachoshech*, he shines in the dark, i.e. he teaches Torah in places of spiritual darkness. Since we know that Torah is called "light", he who dispenses it dissipates darkness. 2)*Or* light is something positive, pure, an expression applicable when Torah knowledge is imparted from a pure source, i.e. by a *yerey shamayim* a truly G'd fearing teacher, someone who teaches Torah according to *halachah*. 3)Torah, to be most effective, should be taught to *yesharim*, to students who are morally suitable who do not study for ulterior selfish egotistical motives. We find that the three attributes *gibor*, *ashir* and *chacham* all achieve their objectives only when their respective owners are *yerey hashem* G'd fearing, and perform *mitzvot*. Man can boast only if he employed his freedom of choice by choosing to be a G'd fearing individual.

G'd has granted man these attributes. In His capacity as being *chanun*, gracious, He granted *gevurah* to the *gibor*, the strong. In His capacity of being *rachum*, merciful, He granted wealth to the *ashir*, wealthy. (in terms of money) In His capacity of being *tzaddik*, righteous, He granted *chochmah* to the wise.

All the wisdom on earth is a result of the revelation at Mount Sinai where every person received his share of insight. G'd being a *tzaddik*, did not deny anyone his fair share of such wisdom. This may be what Daniel had in mind when he said (Daniel 2,21) "He gives wisdom to the wise", i.e. to the ones who have received a share of wisdom at Mount Sinai, and *umande-ah le yodey binah*, i.e. a measure of knowledge to those whose soul has received some insight. (at the revelation)

5. Having said that the true measure of *osher*, happiness is for the *ashir* to use his wealth charitably, and that then *tzidkato* his charity will stand him in good stead forever, a person might say that it is

6He shall never be shaken; the beneficent man will be remembered forever.
7He is not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is firm, he trusts in the LORD.
8His heart is resolute, he is unafraid; in the end he will see the fall of his foes.
9He gives freely to the poor; his beneficence lasts forever; his horn is exalted in honor.
10The wicked man shall see it and be vexed; he shall gnash his teeth; his courage shall fail.
The desire of the wicked shall come to nothing.

sufficient to be a gracious lender, *malveh*, even without actually GIVING of one's money to the poor as a gift. Logic would support such an attitude, since it reflects concern for the dignity and sensitivity of the recipient, and displays confidence that he will be successful and repay the loan. At the same time, the lender does not deplete his capital.

We find that Nebuchadnezzar who had GIVEN away great sums, developed second thoughts when he realized that he was faced with great expenses. The implication there is that had he maintained his philanthropic way of life, he would have escaped punishment indefinitely. (compare Daniel chapter 4)

On the other hand, Munwaz the king who squandered his wealth on the poor and the needy in a year of drought, answered his advisors who accused him of irresponsible behaviour by squandering what his ancestors had accumulated. He told them that whereas his ancestors had accumulated wealth in a transient world, he had accumulated wealth (i.e. good deeds) in an eternal world. Talmud Baba Batra 11 quotes Isaiah 58,8 as justification for Munvaz' behaviour.

It is quite possible therefore that one should be circumspect in what one GIVES away (capital), so that one will not regret what one has done and stop one's philanthropic activities altogether.

6. The *shleymut*, absolute accomplishment of the lender is that he will never totter or collapse, i.e. he will always continue to lend since he observes that his wealth does not diminish due to his generosity. He will not cease being a *tzaddik*.

7. Such a person, – because he is free from sin – does not fear bad tidings. Fearlessness is proof that a person truly puts his trust in G'd. Only guilty people are afraid, and their fear is visible as we read in Berakhot 60 about a student who walked behind Rabbi Ishmael

ז כִּי-לְעוֹלָם לֹא-יִמּוֹט לְזֵכֶר עוֹלָם יִהְיֶה צַדִּיק:
ח מִשְּׁמוּעָה רָעָה לֹא יִירָא נָכוֹן לִבּוֹ בָּטֻחַ בַּיהוָה:
ט סָמוּךְ לִבּוֹ לֹא יִירָא עַד אֲשֶׁר-יִרְאֶה בְצָרָיו:
י פִּזַּר נָתַן לָאֶבְיוֹנִים צִדְקָתוֹ עֹמֶדֶת לָעַד קַרְנוֹ תָּרוּם בְּכָבוֹד:
יא רָשָׁע יִרְאֶה וְכָעַס שִׁנָּיו יַחֲרֹק וְנָמָס תַּאֲוַת רְשָׁעִים תֹּאבֵד:

son of Rabbi Yossi. The way to recognize an *ish tov* a good man is by the serenity of his deportment, his lack of anxieties.

8. Even if his heart feels the need for reassurance – he can face his troubles, is not frightened, has unbounded trust in the Lord. His heart remains steadfast.

9. Having explained the virtue of extending loans in verse 5, and the fact that such people are truly happy, *me-ushar*, the Psalmist now describes people who have given excessively to the needy. Their righteousness endures forever, i.e. they receive their reward in the hereafter, but *karno tarum bekavod* they will experience some dividends already in this world. The Psalmist may mean also that since such a person had been overly generous only as *bemitzvotav chafetz*, because he was so desirous of fulfilling G'd's commandments (verse 1) he need not fear. The usual danger of bankrupting himself and reversing his generous lifestyle will not materialize. His very motivation is insurance against his stopping his philanthropies, since G'd will actively support him by "uplifting his horn in honour".

The Talmud says in Kiddushin 49, that if a man makes an offer of marriage to a woman based on the understanding "that I am wealthy", if he is well respected in his community because of his wealth, he has met the definition of being wealthy, and the prospective bride's acceptance is binding.

We see that *karno tarum bekavod* is another way of describing the GENEROUS philanthropist as being wealthy. Since the word *pizzer* implies scattering, squandering, how is it possible that AFTER having spent his money, *natan* he continues to give? Possibly the Psalmist has in mind that the subject in our verse had made many loans, not actually GIVEN AWAY his entire fortune. When some of the recipients of these loans were unable to repay, – *natan* he converted these loans into gifts, i.e. to the *evyonim*, the destitute,

113 *Hallelujah.*
O Servants of the LORD, give praise; praise the name of the LORD.
2Let the name of the LORD be blessed now and forever.

the ones who did not have anything to repay him with. In this way they were no longer indebted to him, did not need to feel embarrassed.

10. The reaction of the wicked is inverse to that of the *yare et Hashem* in verse 1. When he hears evil tidings and sees the *tzaddik* is unperturbed, protected by his faith, the wicked becomes angry. 2)When the *tzaddik* suffers real problems and copes with fate without becoming embittered, the wicked person gnashes his teeth and melts away, he is overwhelmed by the calm attitude of the *tzaddik*. 3)Finally, when he observes how the conduct of the *tzaddik* is rewarded by *karno tarum*, – the "greed of the wicked perishes", i.e. the wicked (plural this time) are so impressed that even they may reverse their philosophy of greed for earthly possession.

Psalm 113

1. PRAISE! – SERVANTS OF THE LORD. We know that the generation of Jews who left Egypt were called "servants of the Lord", since the Torah states "for to Me are the children of Israel servants; they are My servants whom I have brought forth from the land of Egypt." (Leviticus 25,55) We know further that the miracles performed in Egypt, publicized a renewal of creative activity by G'd, i.e. *chidush ha-olam*, as we have explained in their context.

We know further that the name of G'd is complete when it consists of the 4 letters *yud-heh-vav-heh*. This is the name of G'd Pharaoh had denied knowing. This name was made public knowledge at the time G'd split the sea of reeds. At that time, G'd had said "Egypt will know – when I the Lord (4 lettered name) will become honoured through Pharaoh". (Exodus 14,18)

It is also well known that originally, when creating the universe, G'd employed only His 2 lettered name *yud-heh*, since it is written in Isaiah 26,4 "for with *koh*, i.e. those two letters of the full name of G'd, He became the Rock of the universe".

1)When the Psalmist urges *hallelu*, praise, after having first stated "praise G'd", when it would have sufficed to say immediately "praise the Lord, servants of G'd", what did he have in mind?

2)Why does the Psalmist first urge the praising of G'd, i.e. His 2

קיג א הַלְלוּיָהּ הַלְלוּ עַבְדֵי יְהוָה הַלְלוּ אֶת-שֵׁם יְהוָה:
ב יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם:

lettered name, only to ask the servants of G'd to praise G'd, i.e. the 4 lettered name?

3)Instead of concluding that the name of the Lord would emerge *mehullal*, praised,the Psalmist says that it will emerge *mevorach*, blessed. (verse 2) Why this change of syntax?

4)Why would G'd be blessed only *me-attah*, from now on?

5)Why would the Psalmist restrict praise of the Lord to *mi-mizrach*, from the East?

6)How does verse 4 relate to the previous verse 3, or even to the end of verse 4 itself?

7)Why the grammatical peculiarity of adding the letter *yud* (and in two instances *heh*) at the beginning in the 5 words *Hamagbihi* in verse 5 and subsequent references to Divine activity in verses 5–9?

8)The reference to *akeret ha-bayit*, in verse 9 is strange, especially since Rashi said it does not have the regular meaning here, but refers to "Zion".

9)Why are only 2 aspects of G'd's Personal Providence singled out here, i.e. granting children to barren women, and granting economic dignity to the impoverished?

The Psalmist addresses himself first to all those who deny *hashgachah peratit*, G'd's Personal Providence, and to those who deny that He has created the universe. To those, he calls out *Halelu-koh*. He uses the 2 lettered name of G'd to point at the two worlds G'd has created, the material physical universe we are familiar with, and the spiritual world, the heavens.

As proof that this is indeed so, he turns to Israel saying "praise the name of the Lord, you servants of G'd who have come out of Egypt, and who have personally experienced the *chidush ha-olam*", renewed creative activity by G'd, in their own lives.

2. Ever since the time you have experienced this *chidush ha-olam*, the 4 lettered name of G'd will be employed forthwith in all the benedictions one recites before partaking of any of the pleasures or necessities of this physical universe. One needs to express one's gratitude to G'd and acknowledge that that which one partakes of is His universe, seeing that the Torah had been given at the end of the Exodus experience.

3. All of this is to counter those who believe only in nature, i.e. the regularity of the sunrise in the East, etc., instead of believing in G'd who has created the sun and predetermined its path.

3From east to west the name of the LORD is praised.
4The LORD is exalted above all nations; His glory is above the heavens.
5Who is like the LORD our God, who, enthroned on high,
6sees what is below, in heaven and on earth?
7He raises the poor from the dust, lifts up the needy from the refuse heap
8to set them with the great, with the great men of His people.
9He sets the childless woman among her household as a happy mother of children.
Hallelujah.

4. There are also those who conceive of G'd the Creator as so exalted that they place Him only *AL* above the heaven, i.e. beyond the nations, or even the galaxies. They believe He does not interest Himself in the physical universe ever since He had finished it.

5. These theories are debunked. G'd does involve Himself in our world although He dwells on high. When the Torah lists the genealogy of the Jewish tribes, (Numbers 26,5–7) we find the letter *yud* added to the proper names of the family of Reuben, and the letter *heh* preceding those names. This is to testify in the name of G'd that none of these people had been fathered by someone other than the fathers listed in the Torah. (see Rashi) (compare also Psalm 122,4) The tribes of G'd, are G'd's testimony that He knows what goes on down here, even in areas that we ourselves could not be sure of.

6. It is immaterial whether G'd descends only *lirot*, to see, i.e. briefly, or whether His Presence is of longer duration, i.e. *lashevet*. He is constantly active IN BOTH WORLDS.

The Psalmist emphasizes this to distinguish between heavenly beings such as angels, who assume material form when on a mission to our world. This is so since the angels do not have a claim, a lien on the world, and need to conform (to a degree) to their surroundings. G'd who has created the universe and owns it, does not need to adjust to the conditions prevailing in any part of His universe.

When G'd explained to Moses who had wanted to see His essence, that such a thing is impossible for a mortal human being, (Exodus 33,18) G'd told him (ibid. 22,23) that there was a place "beside Me" from where Moses could observe G'd's "Rear". G'd may have wanted to explain to Moses WHY He does not clothe Himself in

ג מִמִּזְרַח-שֶׁמֶשׁ עַד-מְבוֹאוֹ מְהֻלָּל שֵׁם יְהוָה׃
ד רָם עַל-כָּל-גּוֹיִם יְהוָה עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ׃
ה מִי כַּיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַמַּגְבִּיהִי לָשָׁבֶת׃
ו הַמַּשְׁפִּילִי לִרְאוֹת בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ׃
ז מְקִימִי מֵעָפָר דָּל מֵאַשְׁפֹּת יָרִים אֶבְיוֹן׃
ח לְהוֹשִׁיבִי עִם-נְדִיבִים עִם נְדִיבֵי עַמּוֹ׃
ט מוֹשִׁיבִי עֲקֶרֶת הַבַּיִת אֵם-הַבָּנִים שְׂמֵחָה הַלְלוּיָהּ׃

a protective shell in order to soften the impact of His appearance on onlookers. *Makom itti*, the place, i.e. the universe, is My own, i.e. is merely peripheral to Me, I am not subordinate to it, it is *itti*, beside Me.

7–9. *Shamayim* here means the world of galaxies; – *shemey hashamayim* would refer to the celestial regions. Since the world of galaxies is His, dependent on Him, how much more so does earth depend on Him. Proof that He rules on earth is that when it is time to die, He raises man even from the dust, while G'd Himself is in the celestial regions, as indicated by the letter *yud* at the end of the word *mekimi*, He raises. Even the *evyon*, the completely destitute, the lowliest who could not have aspired to be elevated, will be raised to be seated with the *nedivim*, the angels. Should one be inclined to ascribe this activity to the angels instead of to G'd personally, G'd repeats *im nedivey ammo*. Not only will such an *evyon* be catapulted to join the highest ranks, but he will feel at home there. Such drastic and sudden change in fortune can only be wrought by the Creator who understands the heart of His creatures, not by an angel.

9. Proof that G'd supervises man also while on earth, – before he dies, – is how He transforms the fate of the genetically barren woman, and makes her the joyful mother of children. The possessive form of *akeret* instead of *akarah* is strange. I take it in the sense of the Talmud Yebamot 64 explaining Genesis 11,30, that Sarah was not only barren, but had no womb. *Bayit* would then describe the "housing" the embryo develops in, i.e. the womb. *Akeret habayit* refers to Sarah then, who lacked the fundamental equipment to mother a child, and whom G'd transformed so that she could become a mother. Hence it is our duty to praise the Lord who takes such a personal interest in our well being, as demonstrated. We praise the name *Yud-heh*, in order to remain aware of the dual nature of creation, i.e. that He who created Heaven also created earth.

114 *When Israel went forth from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech, Judah became His holy one, Israel, His dominion.*
3The sea saw them and fled, Jordan ran backward,
4mountains skipped like rams, hills like sheep.
5What alarmed you, O sea, that you fled, Jordan, that you ran backward,
6mountains, that you skipped like rams, hills, like sheep?
7Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the God of Jacob,
8who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flinty rock into a fountain.

Psalm 114

1. When a group of people migrate from a city or country in which they had established personal relations with the inhabitants, they consider themselves as not only leaving behind the city or country, but also their compatriots. If, however, such a group of people had lived as an alien body, and had not integrated with the local population, they would describe themselves as having left behind only the country, not the inhabitants.

The tribe of Levi, who had remained loyal to Hebrew ancestral tradition, fitted the latter description. Therefore, David refers to them as "When Israel left Egypt". The rest of the people are described as having departed "from the midst of a nation which did not speak Hebrew (*am lo-ez*)".

Still, it was only the Egyptians who could be termed *am lo-ez*, the house of Jacob *beyt ya-akov*, had not assimilated to such a degree that they had become indistinguishable from their host nation. They had preserved their Jewish names and their Hebrew tongue.

,2. Another merit that the Jews could claim at the time of the Exodus, was the faith in G'd, which manifested itself by Nachshon son of Aminadav entering the sea of reeds neck deep BEFORE G'd had split the waters He had been confident that G'd would save the Jewish people. While entering the waters he had prayed to G'd to save him. Israel, encouraged by the act of leadership displayed by Nachshon, followed him.

The tribe of Yehudah with Nachshon as their leader had assumed a role of leadership amongst the Jewish people ever since.

This is the meaning of "Yehudah had become holy to Him, Israel made itself His subjects". (spheres of dominion) The word *haytah*, had become, may refer to the original Yehudah having sanctified the

קיד א בְּצֵאת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם בֵּית יַעֲקֹב מֵעַם לֹעֵז:
ב הָיְתָה יְהוּדָה לְקָדְשׁוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל מַמְשְׁלוֹתָיו:
ג הַיָּם רָאָה וַיָּנֹס הַיַּרְדֵּן יִסֹּב לְאָחוֹר:
ד הֶהָרִים רָקְדוּ כְאֵילִים גְּבָעוֹת כִּבְנֵי-צֹאן:
ה מַה-לְּךָ הַיָּם כִּי תָנוּס הַיַּרְדֵּן תִּסֹּב לְאָחוֹר:
ו הֶהָרִים תִּרְקְדוּ כְאֵילִים גְּבָעוֹת כִּבְנֵי-צֹאן:
ז מִלִּפְנֵי אָדוֹן חוּלִי אָרֶץ מִלִּפְנֵי אֱלוֹהַּ יַעֲקֹב:
ח הַהֹפְכִי הַצּוּר אֲגַם-מָיִם חַלָּמִישׁ לְמַעְיְנוֹ-מָיִם:

Lord's name in his dealings with Tamar, when he preferred personal disgrace and saved 3 souls from being burned to death (Tamar and the twins she was pregnant with). Tamar too, had sanctified G'd's name, refusing to save herself at the expense of Yehudah's embarrassment. (compare Genesis 39, 12–28)

The sea responded to Yehudah's individual act of faith, not the people's. Proof of this is the fact that G'd repaid him by granting him a rulership position in Israel. (the davidic dynasty)

3. But the splitting of the sea was due to something the sea "saw". It "saw" the condition the Lord had made at the time when natural law had been established during the days of *ma-asseh bereshit*, the first 6 days of the universe reported in the Torah.

Our sages have a tradition (Shemot Rabbah 21,6) that G'd had agreed with the oceans that a time would come for the waters to disintegrate temporarily. The sea at first refused Moses, claiming that since it had been created on the third day, it would not take orders from a creature (man) which had only been created on the 6th day. When G'd placed His *yemin*, right hand, on the hand of Moses, the sea "saw" and retreated. The Psalmist's reference here is to that Midrash.

5–8. Why does the Psalmist talk about stone turning into water, instead of water turning into stone? (verse 8) Why does he refer to G'd as "the G'd of Ya-akov"? – *Chuli aretz*, according to Rabbenu Yonah is a reference to the Lord who created earth from its very beginnings.

Actually, 4 questions were posed boh to the sea and the river Jordan, which also split. Of the sea, the Torah said *vayibaku hamayim*, the waters split (plural) i.e. in both directions (Exodus 14,21), whereas the waters of the river Jordan retreated only in one

115 *Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to Your name bring glory for the sake of Your love and Your faithfulness.*
2Let the nations not say, "Where, now, is their God?"
3when our God is in heaven and all that He wills He accomplishes.

direction. At any rate the Torah's reference to *vayibaku* (pl.), includes the waters of the Jordan. (Mechilta)

The Psalmist asks why the *sar*, spiritual representative of the sea retreated, when the agreement with G'd had called only for the waters themselves to retreat, not their *sar*, general manager?! If all the waters in the world had been split at that time, the sea would have fulfilled its contract with G'd. Besides, even if the Jordan waters had split without backing up, this would have been compliance with G'd's wishes! (Joshua 3,16)

The next questions are addressed to the hills and mountains, "why did you have to dance?"

7. The sea replies that in the first instance it had responded to the original agreement made with the waters. (Genesis 1,9) At that time, visibility of earth had been commanded to the *sar*, spiritual head of the waters. He had not realized then that G'd Himself would ever appear personally. When G'd appeared, superimposed on Moses' hand, or to his right side, the *sar shel mayim* became frightened; as a result, the waters did not only split, but retreated.

The Jordan in its reply refers to the G'd of Jacob, having not been subject to similar conditions as the sea, i.e. to allow Israel to pass. However, since Jacob had crossed the river Jordan with his staff, (Genesis 32,12) it had become subservient to him. Israel had not crossed the Jordan except for the merit of Jacob. (Midrash hagadol)

AT that time, Jacob's name had not yet become Israel. Now, the Jordan had retreated 40 years prematurely, frightened when it saw the appearance of G'd on the right of Moses.

8. According to the Midrash, the people of Israel drank for 3 days from the drinking water G'd had provided from rocks, during their crossing of the sea. (Tanchumah, Beshalach 10) The mountains rejoiced, feeling certain that what G'd had done for Israel in the sea, He would certainly also do for them in the desert, i.e. to turn rock into a pool of water, and dry rocks into fountains of water.

Psalm 115

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE PSALMIST AND THE *RUACH HAKODESH*. (HOLY SPIRIT)

קטו א לֹא לָנוּ יְהוָה לֹא-לָנוּ כִּי-לְשִׁמְךָ תֵּן כָּבוֹד עַל-חַסְדְּךָ
עַל-אֲמִתֶּךָ׃
ב לָמָּה יֹאמְרוּ הַגּוֹיִם אַיֵּה-נָא אֱלֹהֵיהֶם׃
ג וֵאלֹהֵינוּ בַשָּׁמָיִם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר-חָפֵץ עָשָׂה׃

1. Why is the exclamation *lo lanu* repeated? Why does the Psalmist use the name of G'd only with the first *lo lanu*?

We know that G'd does not feel that His 4 lettered name can be used, ever since Amalek diminished the glory G'd had achieved among mankind as a result of the splitting of the sea. Until, in the future, Amalek will have been disposed of finally, G'd's name on earth is considered incomplete. This is why we have the oblique reference to *leshimcha*, for your name, after the second *lo lanu*. (compare Rashi on Exodus 17,16)

According to the Talmud Pessachim 118, this Psalm refers to the birthpangs of the Messianic age, and it may contrast the lack of merit of the Jewish people at that time, with the relative merit of the Jewish people at the time of the Exodus. At that time there was a Moses who was able to call on G'd successfully, and frighten our enemies. Not so in the age preceding the redemption.

We are told in Baba Batra 78, that "three have been assured the name of G'd, the righteous, Jerusalem and the Messiah". Scriptural proof cited is Isaiah 43,7, re the *tzaddikim*, "all who have been called by My name, etc." Concerning Jerusalem we read in Ezekiel 48,35 "the name of the city from that day on is G'd is there". Concerning the Messiah, it is written in Jeremiah 23,6 "in his days, Yehudah will be helped and Israel will dwell safely, and this is his name which they will call him, lord, our righteous one".

Seeing that in our days we have neither *tzaddikim*, Jerusalem nor Messiah, the Psalmist repeats *lo lanu*, i.e. NOT OURS, we cannot claim to have these powerful advocates at Your Court.

We can only hope that redemption will occur for the sake of "Your name", to give honour and glory to it.

We hope that your 2 lettered name will be fused with the other 2 missing letters, so that your name will become complete, whole. Do it for the sake of "your loving kindness, for the sake of your truth".

2. The word *na*, indicates that the nations do not deny the existence, and one time eminence of our G'd. They only challenge our G'd to show that He is still as strong as He proved to be at the time of the Exodus. This needs to be demonstrated to prove *al amitecha*, your truth, (verse 1) else your name will lack glory.

4Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.
5They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see;
6they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell;
7they have hands, but cannot touch, feet, but cannot walk; they can make no sound in their throats.
8Those who fashion them, all who trust in them, shall become like them.
9O Israel, trust in the LORD! He is their help and shield.
10O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD! He is their help and shield.

3. Although we have to admit that the *Shechinah*, Presence of G'd has withdrawn from earth since the destruction of the temple, when G'd withdrew to the Heavens, i.e. *elokaynu bashamayim*, nonetheless "He does whatever He wants". He did not withdraw from the affairs of the earth. but exercises His supervision from a distance. No one moves a limb in our world, without His awareness and tolerance.

4. If the nations of the world would have had some pretext to worship their deities, their guilt would have been less. Seeing that their deities are metal, i.e. useless, how could these nations dare attack the true G'd? Who can stand such insult? The Psalmist ridicules the idol worshipper "even if the idol had been a golden tongue or a silver tongue" (instead of ingots they had tongue shaped pieces of precious metals in those days) would such a "tongue" have had the ability to talk?

Would a silver object be known by its shape or by the material it is made of? Surely it would be known by its shape only if it were able to perform the function of an object of such shape! How could a silver "tongue" be presumed to be a tongue, if it could not talk? Since it is MAN MADE, it will still be called silver or gold respectively, i.e. it has not become a tongue.

Therefore all these images are merely the shape of certain things, but these shapes cannot perform the function they were meant to perform. They are WORSE even than their human creators. They cannot even perform tasks which the people who have made them CAN perform, how much less can they perform the tasks of deities! They are merely like raw silver, raw unimproved gold!

The Psalmist contrasts this with our G'd, of whom he said in verse 3 "whatever He wills, He does", i.e. when He sets out to create a

ד עֲצַבֵּיהֶם כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אָדָם
ה פֶּה-לָהֶם וְלֹא יְדַבֵּרוּ עֵינַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִרְאוּ:
ו אָזְנַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִשְׁמָעוּ אַף לָהֶם וְלֹא יְרִיחוּן:
ז יְדֵיהֶם וְלֹא יְמִישׁוּן רַגְלֵיהֶם וְלֹא יְהַלֵּכוּ לֹא-יֶהְגּוּ
בִּגְרוֹנָם:
ח כְּמוֹהֶם יִהְיוּ עֹשֵׂיהֶם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר-בֹּטֵחַ בָּהֶם:
ט יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּטַח בַּיהוָה עֶזְרָם וּמָגִנָּם הוּא:
י בֵּית אַהֲרֹן בִּטְחוּ בַיהוָה עֶזְרָם וּמָגִנָּם הוּא

certain living creature, such creature will function in accordance with His plan.

7. The words "they do not breathe a sound with their throat", should really have followed "they have a mouth and cannot speak" in verse 5! Actually, the expression refers back to verse 4 *atzabeyhem*, their deities. Even if we were to assume that these deities were handicapped only in not being able to talk, i.e. make sounds come out of their mouths, but that they were able to think and communicate telepathically, this would not help; after all it is the objective of the creature to model itself after its creator.

Those who rely on them, *kol asher boteach bahem*, deserve to wind up as they would like to, namely as impotent and corpse like as the inert forms they pray to and worship.

9. G'd answers the Psalmist "Israel trust in the Lord", especially when it appears that the idol worshippers are enjoying success by adhering to what they believe in. Just imagine if G'd grants those who transgress His will success (even temporary), how much greater will be your ultimate success seeing that you put your trust in Him.

10. The same applies to the G'd fearing people, and the priests. The fact that the Psalmist does NOT end the verse by saying TO Israel etc. "for He is YOUR salvation and YOUR shield", proves that the Psalmist's reference is to the SUCCESS of the idol worshippers.

12. The Psalmist in appealing to G'd to bless Israel, employs the same syntax G'd Himself had employed in verse 9,10 and 11; i.e. all of Israel, then detailing the house of Aaron, i.e. the Priests, and finally those who fear the Lord. G'd is to bless Israel 3 times. First, when He thinks of us He blesses Israel collectively (much like He blessed Abraham when thinking of him). Then when the Priests bless Israel, G'd re-inforces the blessing like Genesis 12,3 "I will bless those who

[11]O you who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and shield.
[12]The LORD is mindful of us. He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron;
[13]He will bless those who fear the LORD, small and great alike.
[14]May the LORD increase your numbers, yours and your children's also.
[15]May you be blessed by the LORD, Maker of heaven and earth.
[16]The heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth He gave over to man.
[17]The dead cannot praise the LORD, nor any who go down into silence.
[18]But we will bless the LORD now and forever.
Hallelujah.

116 *I love the LORD for He hears my voice, my pleas;*

bless you", i.e. in general terms. Again, subsequently G'd will bless the *yirey hashem* those who fear Him in specific terms. This is the meaning of *haketanim im hagedolim*. David thinks of Israel in terms of *ketanim* the little ones, and of the Priests and those who fear the Lord as the *gedolim*, the big ones.

13. The blessing pronounced here refers to the loyal Jews be they of either of the categories mentioned in verses 10 and 11.

14. Here we have the reply of G'd. Not only will G'd include the *ketanim* in His blessing, as the Psalmist had requested, but He will extend His blessings also to the next generation. The word *aleychem* the first time refers to the *gedolim*, the adults who will experience blessings, increase in numbers. Afterwards their children *beneychem*, together with their elders will experience blessings jointly.

15. G'd is referred to as if still in the process of making Heaven and Earth, i.e. *osseh*, (present tense) instead of *assah* (past tense) for "He made". This is similar to Isaiah 66,22 describing G'd as saying "the new Heaven and the New Earth I am making". Our sages interpret this to mean that G'd is constantly involved in creating new and enduring spiritual dimensions in both heaven and earth. Just as He does this, so you and your children will endure forever. Since you

יא יִרְאֵי יְהוָה בִּטְחוּ בַיהוָה עֶזְרָם וּמָגִנָּם הוּא:
יב יְהוָה זְכָרָנוּ יְבָרֵךְ יְבָרֵךְ אֶת-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יְבָרֵךְ אֶת
-בֵּית אַהֲרֹן:
יג יְבָרֵךְ יִרְאֵי יְהוָה הַקְּטַנִּים עִם-הַגְּדֹלִים:
יד יֹסֵף יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם עֲלֵיכֶם וְעַל-בְּנֵיכֶם:
טו בְּרוּכִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:
טז הַשָּׁמַיִם שָׁמַיִם לַיהוָה וְהָאָרֶץ נָתַן לִבְנֵי-אָדָם:
יז לֹא הַמֵּתִים יְהַלְלוּ-יָהּ וְלֹא כָּל-יֹרְדֵי דוּמָה:
יח וַאֲנַחְנוּ נְבָרֵךְ יָהּ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם הַלְלוּיָהּ:

קטז

א אָהַבְתִּי כִּי-יִשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֶת-קוֹלִי תַּחֲנוּנָי:

know He does not do any of these things for His own benefit, you can be sure He has you in mind when He does them, and that you will be the beneficiaries of His constant activity. (based on Zohar Bereshit)

16. For the Heaven, heaven of heavens, He already has exclusively, i.e. why would He need to create something else? Also, the Earth He has already disposed of by allocating same to man. For whom would G'd have to keep making NEW heavens and earth?

17. If for the idol worshippers, – they who are considered dead certainly do not praise the Lord. The proof for this is that even some of the Israelites will descend to *dummah*, a region of eternal silence. For either category of people, G'd would not have to create new (dimensions of) Heaven and earth.

18. Israel replies: "How can we repay you for all this O Lord, except by blessing You for all the goodness we experience from you". To this, G'd replies *me-attah ve-ad olam*, indeed praise the Lord from now on until forever, as if you had already been redeemed, seeing that your eventual redemption is so certain.

Psalm 116

Author of this Psalm, young David being pursued by King Saul.

1. "I love my voice, for G'd will hear the sound of my supplications". The term *shamo-a* denotes hearing from afar, whereas the term

2for He turns His ear to me whenever I call.
3The bonds of death encompassed me; the torments of Sheol *overtook me.*
I came upon trouble and sorrow
4and I invoked the name of the LORD, "O LORD, save my life!"
5The LORD is gracious and beneficent; our God is compassionate.
6The LORD protects the simple; I was brought low and He saved me.
7Be at rest, once again, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.
8You have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.
9I shall walk before the LORD in the lands of the living.

netiyat ozen, i.e. inclining an ear, means listening to someone who is close by. The Psalmist expresses his delight that G'd Himself and not intermediaries (angels) will listen to him, even if the actual hearing will be like listening from afar, i.e. *yishma*.

Though the Psalmist may have to raise his voice first, i.e. *koli*, and he is not of the calibre of people of whom G'd has said "before they will call, I will answer" (Isaiah 65,24), David does not mind that. His plea is primarily that G'd Himself should listen. This is an overriding concept applicable both when in his youth as well as when he is close to death already.

2. For He has inclined His ear to me in the past. The word *ki*, can have 4 different meanings, i.e. which, for, perhaps and however. In this instance the meaning is "which". David is saying that the One who has inclined His ear to him is so close to me, for He has on previous occasions listened to me BEFORE I called out, since it had been a time of goodwill before G'd, when I had intended to call on Him without the threat of death overhanging me.

3. However, when the pain of death oppresses me etc., when both my body and spirit is afflicted by fear of both physical and spiritual death, i.e. *tzarah* referring to death of the body, and *yagon* referring to the fear of winding up in *gehinnom*, hades, I do not know which prayer has priority, the one for survival of the body or that for survival of my spirit, seeing that I have no time left to me.

4. I call upon the name of the Lord to save my soul, i.e. my spirit,

ב כִּי-הִטָּה אָזְנוֹ לִי וּבְיָמַי אֶקְרָא:
ג אֲפָפוּנִי חֶבְלֵי-מָוֶת וּמְצָרֵי שְׁאוֹל מְצָאוּנִי צָרָה וְיָגוֹן
אֶמְצָא:
ד וּבְשֵׁם-יְהוָה אֶקְרָא אָנָּה יְהוָה מַלְּטָה נַפְשִׁי:
ה חַנּוּן יְהוָה וְצַדִּיק וֵאלֹהֵינוּ מְרַחֵם:
ו שֹׁמֵר פְּתָאִים יְהוָה דַּלֹּתִי וְלִי יְהוֹשִׁיעַ:
ז שׁוּבִי נַפְשִׁי לִמְנוּחָיְכִי כִּי-יְהוָה גָּמַל עָלָיְכִי:
ח כִּי חִלַּצְתָּ נַפְשִׁי מִמָּוֶת אֶת-עֵינִי מִן-דִּמְעָה אֶת-רַגְלִי
מִדֶּחִי:
ט אֶתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה בְּאַרְצוֹת הַחַיִּים:

and I forego praying for the survival of my body. I do not mind physical affliction when the survival of my spirit is at stake.

5. Although G'd is gracious, i.e. *chanun*, He is also righteous i.e. *tzaddik*, and I cannot expect Him to overlook any misdemeanors. Nonetheless, since He is also our Lord who has mercy, He can be relied on to treat us mercifully.

6. However, I do not abandon hope that He will heal my body, since G'd is known to look after the unaware, the foolish, He does not mind looking after the material which is likened to *peti*, the foolish. After I have spoken to G'd, I will address my spirit not to mourn me for having pleaded for you while seeming prepared to consign my body to the grave. Since I have tired myself out for your sake (my spirit's) in this world, suffering deprivations, i.e. *daloti*, for the sake of spiritual elevation, I am sure *li ye-hoshia*, that the Lord will save me, i.e. my body also, if not now at least at the time of the resurrection.

7. But my spirit will return to my resting place in the higher world now, without concern whether my body will be left behind as dust, knowing that whatever G'd has sent my way, He has done for your sake. (the sake of my spirit)

8. To demonstrate his confidence that the body also will merit consideration, the Psalmist says when G'd speaks to him, "just as You have rescued my soul, and my eyes from death etc., I am sure You will also rescue my foot (simile for the physical, the material) from being abandoned after death".

9. "I will walk before G'd in the land of the living", i.e. the land of Israel, of which the Torah states "its soil will atone for its people".

[10]I trust [in the LORD]; out of great suffering I spoke
[11]and said rashly, "All men are false."
[12]How can I repay the LORD for all His bounties to me?
[13]I raise the cup of deliverance and invoke the name of the LORD.

(Deut. 32,43) The subject here would be the present generation who expresses itself as one unit, in the singular, as we have already explained elsewhere.

10. As I verbalize these thoughts, I deeply believe that this will happen to me, since I feel greatly afflicted, and afflictions dissolve sin, purify and set in motion eventual salvation.

11. Should someone question, that perhaps due to feeling so afflicted I have questioned G'd's ways and His justice, David rejects this, saying that at worst, in his haste, such thoughts were directed at the prophet Samuel who had anointed him as king claiming he had done so at G'd's command. Why had he not become king then, since G'd surely keeps HIS word!

12. What can I do for G'd in return? How can I repay G'd for all the goodness I expect from Him, seeing that He is not in need of anything, *kol tagmulohi alay*, all the things He has done for me, remain for me to reciprocate for, i.e. I am in His debt since the day I was born! I cannot make repayment except to remain aware of my debt to Him constantly! The extra letters *heh* and *yud* at the end of the word *tagmulohi*, refer to both the present world which has been created by use of the letter *heh*, and the higher world which has been created by use of the letter *yud*. (compare Talmud Menachot 29, on Genesis 2,4) David says, I cannot repay G'd either for what He has promised me in the world to come. All I am able to do therefore, is to make requests, since I am in no position to reciprocate.

13. My request then is to be able to lift the cup of salvation, since I know I will have a future as the Messiah.

Daniel 2,45 describes the collapse of the 4 empires who have ruled over Israel in exile, in the future. Though 3 of the kingdoms have already lost their prominence, this does not mean that they had disappeared from the earth. The collapse of the 4th kingdom (empire), enables David (representative of Israel) to lift the cup of salvation in praise of the Almighty. Previously, Israel had thanked G'd with a single cup for each salvation. At the time when the 4th empire will be destroyed, one cup would be raised to thank G'd for deliverance from all 4 exiles. Proof that the 3 prior empires had not totally disintegrated, is to be found (according to the Zohar) in the

י הֶאֱמַנְתִּי כִּי אֲדַבֵּר אֲנִי עָנִיתִי מְאֹד:
יא אֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי בְחָפְזִי כָּל-הָאָדָם כֹּזֵב:
יב מָה-אָשִׁיב לַיהוָה כָּל-תַּגְמוּלוֹהִי עָלָי:
יג כּוֹס-יְשׁוּעוֹת אֶשָּׂא וּבְשֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא:

peculiar wording of Zachariah 14,12, "This will be the pestilence G'd will smite with all the nations who have made war against Jerusalem". We would have expected the prophet to predict "who WILL MAKE war against Jerusalem". The prophecy however, concerns the distant future, at which time those who have survived from the 3 other empires and who had battled Jerusalem in their heyday, will again march against Jerusalem under the banner of the 4th kingdom. At that time they will all be punished, as described in this prophecy.

This may be a veiled reference to a meal described in the Talmud Pessachim 119, which G'd will prepare and to whom illustrious persons such as the patriarchs etc. are invited. At the end of that meal, Abraham is invited to raise the cup and preside over the saying of grace. He declines, so do all the other notables, except David who volunteers to accept the honour. It is this event which David may have in mind here when he says "I will raise the cup of salvations". The reason that cup is called the "cup of salvations" (plural), not "the cup of salvation" (singular) is the fact that this salvation incorporates all the preceding salvations from the other 3 kingdoms. They (the salvations) correspond to the 4 letters in the holy name of G'd, which was not really whole until that time when all G'd's adversaries will be finally defeated. G'd had said in Exodus 17,16, that as long as there is Amalek, i.e. an organized anti G'd force that has to be battled, His throne i.e. *kess* instead of *kisseh*, and His name, i.e. *yud-heh* instead of *yud-heh-vav-heh* is not complete, whole. David says here "I will proclaim in the name of the 4 lettered name of G'd, when G'd will have taken revenge on Amalek=Edom".

At the present time, even when there are 10 thousand people present, Halachah permits only a reference to *elokeynu* when the introductory formula to grace is being intoned. After the defeat of the 4th kingdom however, the 4 lettered name of G'd will be included when grace is intoned and the requisite number of people are present. David looks forward to the time when he (or his descendant the Messiah) will be able to present this accolade to G'd as the only token of gratitude he feels it is possible to accord to G'd.

14 *I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all*
His people.
15 *The death of His faithful ones is grievous in the*
LORD's sight.
16 *O LORD, I am Your servant, Your servant, the son of*
Your maidservant; You have undone the cords that
bound me.
17 *I will sacrifice a thank offering to You and invoke the*
name of the LORD.
18 *I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all*
His people,
19 *in the courts of the house of the LORD, in the midst of*
Jerusalem.
Hallelujah.

14. However, I ask that the temple be built now in my lifetime, so that I can pay my vows, bring the requisite sacrifices 3 times a year, in the presence of all my people, or at the consecration of the temple. The extra letter *heh* at the end of the word *negdanah*, is to indicate the additional level of *Shechinah*, divine Presence which will be manifest once the permanent temple has been built at the proper site in Jerusalem. (At the time this hymn was composed, Jerusalem had not yet been captured).

15. Is it not part of G'd's nature that it is difficult for Him to decree the death of the pious? Had they not asked him for death, He would not have let them die. (compare Talmud Chagigah 14) Although David does not consider himself as one of G'd's *chassidim*, pious people, he does feel that he is G'd's servant.

16. He expresses the hope that G'd therefore would have difficulty in letting him die. He begs to live to see the temple built. If G'd should not be prepared to grant his request because of his own merit, he asks that he be granted this favour since he is the son of his mother, i.e. his maternal ancestor Ruth, who surely is G'd's servant par excellence, and who surely has accumulated sufficient merit! Our sages (Ruth Rabbah 8) interpret the verse (Ruth 2,12) "may your reward be *shelaymah*, complete, as meaning *Shlomoh*, King Solomon. Ruth was reportedly still alive when Solomon was crowned. Solomon placed a chair for her beside his throne, as is written (Kings I 2,18) "he placed a chair for the king's mother, and she sat on his right". Rashi quotes our sages as saying that "the mother of the king" refers to Ruth, who is considered the mother of the Davidic dynasty.

יד נְדָרַי לַיהוָה אֲשַׁלֵּם נֶגְדָּה-נָּא לְכָל-עַמּוֹ׃
טו יָקָר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה הַמָּוְתָה לַחֲסִידָיו׃
טז אָנָּה יְהוָה כִּי-אֲנִי עַבְדֶּךָ אֲנִי עַבְדְּךָ בֶּן-אֲמָתֶךָ
פִּתַּחְתָּ לְמוֹסֵרָי׃
יז לְךָ אֶזְבַּח זֶבַח תּוֹדָה וּבְשֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא׃
יח נְדָרַי לַיהוָה אֲשַׁלֵּם נֶגְדָּה-נָּא לְכָל-עַמּוֹ׃
יט בְּחַצְרוֹת בֵּית יְהוָה בְּתוֹכֵכִי יְרוּשָׁלָם הַלְלוּיָהּ׃

David is asking G'd to grant him long life, just as He granted it to his ancestor Ruth, in order to enable him to visit the temple even if the time to raise the cup of salvations had not come yet. At least he wants to acknowledge *pitachta lemoseray*, You have loosed my personal bonds, i.e. G'd has freed me from the persecution of Saul and others.

17. For all these salvations experienced on a personal level, David vows to offer two thanksgiving offerings, one for the goodness experienced at the hands of G'd, the other for the very fact of having the opportunity to thank G'd. This is why he does not say "to You I will slaughter a thanksgiving offering", but adds the extra word *zevach*, meat offering, to make it clear he vows two offerings. He adds that he also hopes to proclaim the 4 lettered name of G'd in due course, referring to the previously mentioned "cup of salvations".

18. My vows could be paid now when the first temple is to be erected, or, when the third and last temple will be built. (Messianic times) But what is important is that they be paid in the presence of all of G'd's nations now, so that all G'd's enemies will observe it and be put to shame.

19. The sanctuary also relates to the spiritual home of G'd, since Jacob had called it "house of G'd". (Genesis 28,17) Inasmuch as the first and second temple are of this world, physical buildings built by man, their relative value to the ultimate temple is like that of the courtyard to the palace. Hence David says, that though he finds himself now only in "the courtyards of the house of G'd", this temple combines values of both the material and the spiritual world, i.e. the world which has been created with the letter *heh* as well as the values of the higher world which has been created with the letter *yud*. This is why the word *neged*, in the presence of, has a *heh* at the end, and the word *betoch* in the midst of, has an added letter *yud* at the end.

117 *Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol Him, all you peoples,*
2for great is His steadfast love toward us; the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.
Hallelujah.

118 *Praise the LORD, for He is good, His steadfast love is eternal.*

Psalm 117

1. Our sages (Vayikra Rabbah 1,1) have said that had the nations realized how much they stood to lose through the destruction of the temple, they never would have destroyed it. While G'd poured His bounty on Israel, the nations had benefited in even greater measure from the fallout of G'd's generosity. Whereas in the last hymn, David spoke of the period of the first temple, he continues to refer to that period while he calls upon the nations to praise the Lord.

2. Just as His kindness was mighty over us, – when the temple had been standing, – He still continues to display His mercy to them. The meaning of *emet* truth is something that continues, endures, like water. Since G'd's 4 lettered name will not be whole till Amalek has been destroyed, David urges that the nations use the interval when G'd has mercy on them to praise the 2 lettered name of G'd, since *leolam*, in due course, eventually, G'd's true 4 lettered name will be established.

Our sages state in Bamidbar Rabbah 1, that these verses were recited by Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah after they came out of the fiery furnace Nebuchadnezzar had them thrown into. Chananyah said "praise the Lord, all nations"; Mishael said "for His kindness has been mighty", and Azaryah said "and G'd's truth prevails forever". This interpretation is based on our sages not understanding why David would call on all the nations to praise the Lord. Had all these nations been present, that David was able to exhort them to praise the Lord? Besides, why would the nations praise the Lord for the kindness G'd had shown us, His people, i.e. *gavar aleynu chassdo*? Besides, how does the word "G'd's truth" connect with what is written immediately before?, i.e. His *chessed*? Therefore, our sages attribute this hymn to a time when the nations or their representatives are all present (Daniel chapter 3), when Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah were being thrown into the furnace for refusing to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image.

קיז א הַלְלוּ אֶת-יְהוָה כָּל-גּוֹיִם שַׁבְּחוּהוּ כָּל-הָאֻמִּים:
ב כִּי גָבַר עָלֵינוּ חַסְדּוֹ וֶאֱמֶת-יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם הַלְלוּיָהּ:

קיח א הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי-טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ:

Chananyah began by calling the nations to praise the Lord, saying that if he and his companions would not sanctify the Lord's name, but act like everyone else, the whole world would collapse. Other nations owe their existence to the fact that loyal Jews sanctify His name. The world exists only when there are at least a few loyal servants of G'd.

To the enquiry that if Israel was the main focus of G'd's universe, why did the nations ALL benefit from G'd's bounty while the temple had been standing, Mishael replied "you were the beneficiaries of the excess of G'd's bounty". To forestall the argument why the nations now that Israel was in exile still enjoyed the good life, independent of G'd's bounty for Israel, Azaryah proclaimed that "the truth of G'd will become evident *leolam*", i.e. in the long run. Meanwhile, *hallelu-y-ah* praise the 2 lettered name of G'd while you have a chance, since once G'd's truth will be revealed, when His 4 lettered name will be proclaimed, ALL goodness will be granted exclusively to Israel.

Psalm 118

1. Following the sages (Bamidbar Rabbah 1) who view the previous chapter as having been said by Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah, when they were saved from the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, it is likely that this call also is addressed to the Jews in the Babylonian exile. The subsequent 3 verses would then refer to the other 3 exiles the Jewish people would have to face.

This would justify that 4 separate calls for thanksgiving are made here despite the fact that the second call would have already included the house of Aaron and the G'd fearing people, since they are all part of "Israel". Furthermore, the very fact that the second verse calls upon "Israel", makes it clear that the first verse did not have "Israel" as its subject, but refers to the escape from Nebuchadnezzar's decree to worship his image. At that time BOTH Israel and the other nations had reason to thank the Lord who had saved Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah. Through their having sanctified the name of the Lord, both Israel and the nations retained

2Let Israel declare, "His steadfast love is eternal."
3Let the house of Aaron declare, "His steadfast love is eternal."
4Let those who fear the LORD declare, "His steadfast love is eternal."
5In distress I called on the LORD; the Lord answered me and brought me relief.
6The LORD is on my side, I have no fear; what can man do to me?
7With the LORD on my side as my helper, I will see the downfall of my foes.
8It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in mortals;
9it is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in the great.

their right to exist on earth. *Ki leolam chassdo*, i.e. His kindness did not extend only to the 3 people whom He saved from the furnace, wo had sanctified His name, but to the whole world.

2. Concerning the exile under the Medes (Persians), which G'd has saved us from, the Psalmist proclaims that "Israel" should give thanks. At that time there was no fear that the world, i.e. mankind would be doomed. There had not been any overt disloyal acts by the Jews, therefore G'd also worked no overt miracles according to the opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochay. Only Israel had been endangered by Haman, not civilization as a whole, as in the days of the Babylonian exile.

3. Concerning the Greek exile, (Antiochus etc.) it was primarily the Hasmoneans (the priests, i.e. the house of Aaron) who rejoiced, since G'd had granted them victory. The people at large had not resisted the introduction of Greek culture, had actively participated, and could not view themselves as having been saved.

4. Concerning the coming salvation, of which the prophet says (Isaiah 4,3) "he who will be left in Zion or Jerusalem will be spoken of as holy", the Psalmist addresses those people by saying "let the G'd fearing ones proclaim that G'd's kindness lasts forever".

5. Since we understand the hymn as referring to the salvation of the future, at a time when G'd's 4 lettered name will be complete, i.e. when G'd will be acknowledged in all his grandeur and majesty by all HIS creatures, when the Messiah will have come and Amalek have been wiped out, David, as the prototype of the Messiah assures the

ג יֹאמַר-נָא יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ:
ג יֹאמְרוּ-נָא בֵּית-אַהֲרֹן כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ:
ד יֹאמְרוּ-נָא יִרְאֵי יְהוָה כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ:
ה מִן-הַמֵּצַר קָרָאתִי יָהּ עָנָנִי בַמֶּרְחָב יָהּ:
ו יְהוָה לִי לֹא אִירָא מַה-יַּעֲשֶׂה לִי אָדָם:
ז יְהוָה לִי בְּעֹזְרָי וַאֲנִי אֶרְאֶה בְשֹׂנְאָי:
ח טוֹב לַחֲסוֹת בַּיהוָה מִבְּטֹחַ בָּאָדָם:
ט טוֹב לַחֲסוֹת בַּיהוָה מִבְּטֹחַ בִּנְדִיבִים:

Jewish people that since he had personally experienced salvation at the hands of the 2 lettered name of G'd, i.e. *yud-heh*, he is doubly certain that the Jewish people will experience salvation when G'd's name will be complete. The *merchav* he talks about, is the open space he called out to Saul from, when he was fully exposed, having come out of the cave. (Samuel I 24,8) He feels he had then been in an untenable position from which G'd had rescued him.

6. In the future, he would not be afraid on account of the sin of Adam whose re-incarnation on earth he feels himself to be. Based on Midrash hagadol on Genesis 2,4 as well as Avot de Rabbi Natan, Adam had called G'd by His 4 lettered name. (prior to the sin) Since Adam himself had used that name for G'd, Adam's re-incarnate is not afraid; i.e. what can man do to me since G'd has proved to be on my side? My forbear Adam cannot fault me since his sin has already been amended!

7. All men have both merits and demerits. David calls the merits *ozray*, my helpers. The demerits are *son-ay*, my enemies. David, – aware of our tradition that repentance converts demerits into merits if the repentance was motivated by a love of G'd rather than fear of punishment, says, that he has no fear even concerning his demerits, feeling certain they had been converted into merits. (compare Ezekiel 33,19 as interpreted by the Talmud Yoma 86)

8. Despite all this, David exhorts the people to repent and not to rely on his merits or the merits of other leaders of the nation. They should not say that Israel will be redeemed by *tzedakah*, i.e. righteous deeds alone, as per Isaiah 54,14. Do not rely on man's merit, put your faith only in G'd.

9. Do not even put your faith in those of you who perform good deeds.

[10]All nations have beset me; by the name of the LORD
I will surely cut them down.
[11]They beset me, they surround me; by the name of the
LORD I will surely cut them down.
[12]They have beset me like bees; they shall be
extinguished like burning thorns; by the name of the
LORD I will surely cut them down.
[13]You pressed me hard, I nearly fell; but the LORD
helped me.
[14]The LORD is my strength and might; He has become
my deliverance.
[15]The tents of the victorious resound with joyous shouts
of deliverance, "The right hand of the LORD is
triumphant!
[16]The right hand of the LORD is exalted!
The right hand of the LORD is triumphant!"
[17]I shall not die but live and proclaim the works of the
LORD.
[18]The LORD punished me severely, but did not hand me
over to death.

10. Proof is the fact that when I was surrounded by a variety of nations, I did not put my trust in men, but I cut them down in the name of the Lord.

11. When surrounded by other nations later, like Aram and Moab, I cut them off only with the name of the Lord.

12. Again later, (Samuel II 10,17) when Aram and Ammon fought David, I destroyed them by calling in the name of the Lord. Copy my example, David says, and place all your trust in the Lord.

13. In order to illustrate how good it is to trust in the Lord, and that there is no other saviour, David tells his people to consider his own example. He turns to his evil urge, i.e. *yetzer hara*, and says "though you have repeatedly pushed me, trying to make me fall, (referring to the temptation to kill Nabal and Saul who both had wanted him dead) G'd has assisted me and I have not given in to this urge. (compare Samuel I 25,31, and chapter 26, 10–13)

14. In all these instances it was the 2 lettered name of G'd who has become my salvation. The same G'd who has been my salvation, has at the same time been *zimur, zimra*, i.e. the cutting down, pruning of my enemies. I merited this because I battled my evil urges.

15. Let no one say that it was I who killed my adversaries, and not

י כָּל-גּוֹיִם סְבָבוּנִי בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה כִּי אֲמִילַם:
יא סַבּוּנִי גַם-סְבָבוּנִי בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה כִּי אֲמִילַם:
יב סַבּוּנִי כִדְבֹרִים דֹּעֲכוּ כְּאֵשׁ קוֹצִים בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה כִּי אֲמִילַם:
יג דָּחֹה דְחִיתַנִי לִנְפֹּל וַיהוָה עֲזָרָנִי:
יד עָזִּי וְזִמְרָת יָהּ וַיְהִי-לִי לִישׁוּעָה:
טו קוֹל רִנָּה וִישׁוּעָה בְּאָהֳלֵי צַדִּיקִים יְמִין יְהוָה עֹשָׂה חָיִל:
טז יְמִין יְהוָה רוֹמֵמָה יְמִין יְהוָה עֹשָׂה חָיִל:
יז לֹא-אָמוּת כִּי-אֶחְיֶה וַאֲסַפֵּר מַעֲשֵׂי יָהּ:
יח יַסֹּר יִסְּרַנִּי יָהּ וְלַמָּוֶת לֹא נְתָנָנִי:
יט פִּתְחוּ-לִי שַׁעֲרֵי-צֶדֶק אָבֹא-בָם אוֹדֶה יָהּ:

G'd who has accomplished these two opposites (saving me and killing my enemies). When G'd wants to, He singlehandedly destroys Israel's enemies, as at the time of Hezzekiah, when G'd killed Sancheriv's army while Israel sang the Hallel and celebrated the Passover. *Kol rinah* refers to the singing of the Hallel, while G'd's "right hand" performed deeds of valour. (compare Chronicles II 32,22)

16. Not only this, but even at a time when G'd's hand is *romemah*, i.e. high up, when He seems to have withdrawn from our lower world, such as at the time when the temple was destroyed, G'd's right hand still did valiantly, and saved Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah. (Daniel chapter 2)

17. Although I have stated that I was saved *be-merchav "yud-heh"*, by an expanded version of G'd's 2 lettered name, and I had called on the 4 lettered name of G'd as had done my ancestor Adam, let no one assume that the 2 lettered name of G'd is not powerful enough to provide salvation.

Even if I were to live forever, I would not be able to tell all the accomplishments of the 2 lettered name of G'd in such an infinite life. When He saved me, this was merely a compliment to me; He did not HAVE to manifest Himself in such a fashion.

18. Not only this, but even in His two lettered manifestation He has accomplished performing 2 opposites at the same time, namely disciplining me repeatedly, and thereby saving me from death.

19*Open the gates of victory for me that I may enter them and praise the LORD.*
20*This is the gateway to the LORD— the victorious shall enter through it.*
21*I praise You, for You have answered me, and have become my deliverance.*
22*The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.*
23*This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our sight.*
24*This is the day that the LORD has made— let us exult and rejoice on it.*
25*O LORD, deliver us!*
O LORD, let us prosper!
26*May he who enters be blessed in the name of the LORD; we bless you from the House of the LORD.*

19. This is not all, but when the temple will be built, the gates will be opened only if at least my bier is present. (compare similar in Talmud Shabbat 30) "For the sake of your servant David, do not reject the face of your anointed" (Psalm 132,10) David says "do not belittle the 2 lettered name of G'd, since the gates of the temple were opened for my sake so that I could enter and give thanks to the 2 lettered name of G'd.

20. The reason David does NOT give thanks to the 4 lettered name of G'd is, that only in the future when the third temple will be built, will these gates ONLY admit the righteous. At that time all Israelites will be total *tzaddikim*, thoroughly righteous people, since all who survive at that time will be holy. (Isaiah 4,3) Prior to that time, only the 2 lettered name of G'd is operative.

21. Just as supplicants end their supplications by expressing thanks to G'd in anticipation of their request being granted, so David thanks G'd for having personally experienced G'd's goodness, even if the salvation from exile has not yet materialized. He implies that though this is something minor in the eyes of G'd, it deserves gratitude since it is salvation on a personal level.

22. The proof that it was G'd Himself who had been the author of this salvation, is the fact that a stone despised by the builders has NOT ONLY become accepted, but has achieved crucial prominence.

23. It is clear that this was not due to *mazzal*, or even due to one of G'd's agents, an angel, but *me-et hashem*, due to G'd's direct intervention; it is something wonderful in our eyes. (though an

כ זֶה-הַשַּׁעַר לַיהוָה צַדִּיקִים יָבֹאוּ בוֹ׃
כא אוֹדְךָ כִּי עֲנִיתָנִי וַתְּהִי-לִי לִישׁוּעָה׃
כב אֶבֶן מָאֲסוּ הַבּוֹנִים הָיְתָה לְרֹאשׁ פִּנָּה׃
כג מֵאֵת יְהוָה הָיְתָה זֹּאת הִיא נִפְלָאת בְּעֵינֵינוּ׃
כד זֶה-הַיּוֹם עָשָׂה יְהוָה נָגִילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בוֹ׃
כה אָנָּא יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא אָנָּא יְהוָה הַצְלִיחָה נָּא׃
כו בָּרוּךְ הַבָּא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה בֵּרַכְנוּכֶם מִבֵּית יְהוָה׃

insignificant accomplishment viewed from G'd's vantage point)

24. We know that our sages who interpret Isaiah 60,22 (in Talmud Sanhedrin 98) "I the Lord, at its time I will hasten it", explain this to mean that G'd will bring the redemption at its appointed time if Israel does not merit it, but *achishenu* I will hasten it, i.e. My timetable will be accelerated if Israel merits it. David refers to this day of redemption – which even if delayed until it occurs only at its appointed time – will cause us to rejoice since the forces of the anti G'd will be going up in flames, and the righteous will rejoice. (Maleachi 3,19–21) "This day" that David speaks about is identical with the "day" in Maleachi 3,17.

25. Our request is that this day should not be delayed until it is *be-ittah*, at its appointed time, but that this day should be advanced. It should happen now already! We are requesting this for two reasons 1)to save us from evil and persecution etc. 2) to become the recipients of the good, the positive which results from redemption.

26. After having said that we wish redemption to be accelerated, and that we beseech G'd to pour upon us a spirit which will help us do repentance so that we can qualify as righteous people and be redeemed, the holy spirit now replies by saying *baruch haba*, let him who comes be blessed in the name of the Lord. To understand what is meant by this, let us recall the statement by Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachmeni in Talmud Baba Batra 75. He said "3 have their names associated with the name of G'd, the righteous, the Messiah and Jerusalem". The holy spirit here answers that delay of the Messiah is not due to the Messiah, whose name already is associated with G'd, nor is due to Jerusalem, who is also associated with G'd's name. The delay is due only to your not being *tzaddikim*, righteous yet. Since you request heavenly assistance in becoming *tzaddikim*, you will be blessed from the house of G'd, i.e. the temple. Beyond this however,

27The LORD is God; He has given us light; bind the festal offering to the horns of the altar with cords.
28You are my God and I will praise You; You are my God and I will extol You.
29Praise the LORD for He is good, His steadfast love is eternal.

119 *Happy are those whose way is blameless, who follow the teaching of the LORD.*

righteousness cannot simply be bestowed upon you. The blessing will be sort of preparatory to your achieving righteousness.

27. Israel replies to this message, by saying that G'd comprises two attributes. 1)The attribute of *chessed*, kindness, 2)the attribute of mercy. The former attribute is referred to as *el*, the latter as *hashem*. There is yet a third attribute, i.e. *va-yaer lanu*, He has lit up for us, provided enlightenment.

We have explained the meaning of Lamentations 5,13 "O Lord bring us back to You so that we can do repentance" as meaning that we implore G'd not to wait until we ourselves initiate repentance and to assist us then, but rather that G'd should take the initiative and we would then find our way back to Him. G'd has done so once before in Egypt, when Israel worshipped the lamb. At that time we had stated that the idea to slaughter an Egyptian deity was out of the question since the Egyptians would surely kill us. (Exodus 8,22)

Nonetheless when G'd commanded the Israelites to set aside the lamb for slaughter for 4 days, Israel did so without exception. This sudden reversal to become willing to die for the sanctification of the Lord was so extreme, that unless the people had received Divine inspiration it cannot be rationally explained. This is what the prophet Jeremiah had in mind in the verse of Lamentations quoted when he said "renew our days as of old", i.e. when G'd has set in motion Israel's return to the Jewish tradition. Here David says *va-yaer lanu*, G'd has been this sort of enlightenment for us previously. Even though we do not qualify for this, we plead for G'd's initiative, just as when we once tied the lamb to our bedposts in Egypt for 4 days prior to slaughtering it on the 14th of Nissan, towards evening on the holiday on the corners of the altar. *Avotim* are the ropes with which the lambs had been bound. *Chag* is the evening of the 14th Nissan at the time prior to Israel's departure.

28. The Messiah responds "I have already been told "blessed the

כז אֵל יְהוָה וַיָּאֶר לָנוּ אִסְרוּ-חַג בַּעֲבֹתִים עַד-קַרְנוֹת
הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:
כח אֵלִי אַתָּה וְאוֹדֶךָּ אֱלֹהַי אֲרוֹמְמֶךָּ:
כט הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי-טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ:

קיט

א אַשְׁרֵי תְמִימֵי-דָרֶךְ הַהֹלְכִים בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה:

one who comes in the name of the Lord". I do not say this boastfully, but on the contrary, You are my G'd and I give thanks for the kindness You O Lord have shown me, and I exalt You for being my G'd".

29. The holy spirit replies "praise the Lord for He is good, His kindness lasts forever", regardless of whether you are worthy; know that He is the Helper and He performs kind deeds even if it has to be due to HIS goodness and not in response to your piety. At the appointed time the redemption will come nevertheless.

Psalm 119

1. There are 3 categories of people amongst those who serve the Lord. One group makes the study of Torah its main preoccupation, but does not actively pursue opportunities to perform various *mitzvot*. When the opportunity arises they perform whatever *mitzvah* presents itself.

A second group of people seek out the opportunities to perform *mitzvot*, but they do not make Torah study the central focus of their lives.

A third group of people make neither Torah study nor the fulfilment of commandments regulating our religious behaviour, i.e. commandments between man and G'd, their main focus, but they concentrate on avoiding sin and extending help to their fellow man to the best of their ability. They try to emulate the attributes of G'd. Since we know that G'd is merciful, they try to be merciful. Since we know that G'd is patient, they try and exercise patience with their fellow man, and they forgive easily. They provide clothing for the naked, visit the sick, bury the dead etc.

They do this in accordance with our sages' interpretation of Deuteronomy 28,9 "and you shall walk in His ways". (The *sefer hachinuch* lists this as the 611th of the 613 commandments. The whole theme is elaborated on in Talmud Shabbat 133).

2Happy are those who observe His decrees, who turn to Him wholeheartedly.
3They have done no wrong, but have followed His ways.
4You have commanded that Your precepts be kept diligently.
5Would that my ways were firm in keeping Your laws;
6then I would not be ashamed when I regard all Your commandments.
7I will praise You with a sincere heart as I learn Your just rules.

David, i.e. the Psalmist refers to each of these three groups separately. He begins with the first group, saluting the *temimey derech*, the people who realize that this world is but the path to the world to come. Man is supposed to walk in integrity, without sin, and to make Torah his main concern until it can be said of him "hail to the one who has arrived at this stage, i.e. beyond the grave, while his Torah learning is intact". (Pessachim 50) The Talmud discusses the glimpse Rabbi Yoseph had of the hereafter when he was on the brink of death and made a miraculous recovery. The Psalmist then is referring to those *holchim*, who depart this world with their Torah learning intact, i.e. they have not become corrupted during their lifetime.

2. The second group of *ovdey hashem*, the Lord's servants, are the *notzrey edotav*, the ones who make a specialty of observing the commandments between man and G'd. The Psalmist studiously avoids the expression *shomrey*, and uses *notzrey* which is a more active term than *shemirah*, keeping, preserving. (compare Proverbs 27,18) Solomon there states that he who tends and guards the fig tree will eat its fruit. Similarly, the people who meticulously seek out *mitzvot* – provided they do so *bechol lev* wholeheartedly, not for the sake of the reward. They even employ their *yetzer hara*, baser instincts to serve the Lord, do not allow it to make out of their service to the Lord a selfish kind of piety, an ego trip.

3. The Psalmist adds that also those who neither devoted most of their lives to Torah study nor to the diligent performance of the *mitzvot* between man and G'd, but who carefully refrained from sin and devoted themselves to the welfare of their fellow human beings, emulating G'd, are to be considered *ashrey*, deserve to be saluted, are truly happy.

4. Should you ask that if this third group of people also qualifies for the term *ashrey*, – why did G'd bother to give us 613

ב אַשְׁרֵי נֹצְרֵי עֵדֹתָיו בְּכָל-לֵב יִדְרְשׁוּהוּ׃
ג אַף לֹא-פָעֲלוּ עַוְלָה בִּדְרָכָיו הָלָכוּ׃
ד אַתָּה צִוִּיתָה פִקֻּדֶיךָ לִשְׁמֹר מְאֹד׃
ה אַחֲלַי יִכֹּנוּ דְרָכַי לִשְׁמֹר חֻקֶּיךָ׃
ו אָז לֹא-אֵבוֹשׁ בְּהַבִּיטִי אֶל-כָּל-מִצְוֹתֶיךָ׃
ז אוֹדְךָ בְיֹשֶׁר לֵבָב בְּלָמְדִי מִשְׁפְּטֵי צִדְקֶךָ׃

commandments? After all our *tachlit*, purpose on earth seems capable of achievement simply by being good to our fellow man and the avoidance of sin?

The Psalmist replies: "You have commanded Your mandates *lishmor me-od*, to act as great insurance.

The Psalmist paraphrases Rabbi Chananya ben Akashya who stated "G'd wanted to bestow great favour on Israel, hence He gave them Torah and laws in abundant measure" (Makkot 23)

The problem that had troubled Rabbi Chananyah had been that since the performance of even a SINGLE commandment coupled with abstention from sin, results in one's acquiring one's entrance ticket to the world to come (Kiddushin 39) "long life and inheritance of the earth", why does G'd need to give us 613 different commandments? Therefore Rabbi Chananyah says that G'd wanted to provide us with many avenues of acquiring merits. In this manner the OPPORTUNITY to perform *mitzvot* would certainly present itself to each individual, something one could not be certain of if there were only a few commandments.

Another reason for the multitude of commandments is the fact that each commandment performed creates a *malach*, angel, positive spiritual force, which in turn helps protect the person who has performed that *mitzvah*. The more *mitzvot* a person performs, the greater the protective force he creates around himself, hence the Psalmist says *pikudecha lishmor me-od*, Your mandates create great protection.

5. It is well known that of all the commandments that the *yetzer hara*, evil urge, tries to persuade a Jew to disregard, he is most successful with the *chukkim*, those laws that defy logical comprehension. The Psalmist therefore asks G'd's special assistance to help him also observe the Torah's *chukkim*, *achalee*, I wish to receive Your assistance. Then it will be so much easier for me to view all Your commandments favorably, and I will not be ashamed to

[8]I will keep Your laws; do not utterly forsake me.
[9]How can a young man keep his way pure?— by holding to Your word.
[10]I have turned to You with all my heart; do not let me stray from Your commandments.
[11]In my heart I treasure Your promise; therefore I do not sin against You.
[12]Blessed are You, O LORD; train me in Your laws.
[13]With my lips I rehearse all the rules You proclaimed.

fulfil any of them. Literally, when I look at the fringes, *tzitzit*, and am reminded of ALL the commandments (Numbers 15,39) *lo evosh*, I need not feel embarrassed for not having fulfilled any of them.

7. I hope to be so deeply immersed in Your *mitzvot* that I am not ONLY preoccupied with their performance, but with study of their details. Even the study of the fine points of the *mishpatim*, social legislation which requires a very keen intellect, should become as clear to me as halachic rulings handed down by tradition in unmistakable detail. Then I will be able to thank You with *yosher levav*, a clear heart, unconfused.

8. I will make the first move, i.e. I will begin to observe Your statutes which defy my understanding, but *al ta-azveyni*, do not forsake me, i.e. please grant me Your help so that I will continue to observe these statutes. Grant me understanding *ad me-od*, until they will assume great meaning for me.

9. Up until now, the Psalmist had asked for G'd's help to observe those commandments which the mind cannot comprehend. Now he asks to be granted an intellectual appreciation of these laws. Whereas it is sufficient for a *na-ar*, immature youngster to be told to observe these laws without paying heed to their significance, for an adult of my stature this is not sufficiently inspirational, says David.

10. Do not suspect that it is the evil urge talking, and that I have reservations or doubts about these statutes, and that this is the reason I want to know their meaning. Rather, *al tashgeni mimitzvotecha*, I ask for clarification so that Your commandments will not lead me astray, i.e. so that I do not arrive at faulty conclusions regarding their meaning.

An example would be that David's own son Solomon is reported to have erred BECAUSE the Torah revealed a reason for the injunction that the king should not marry too many wives. (Deuteronomy 17,17) Rabbi Yitzchak in Sanhedrin 21, states that the

ח אֶת-חֻקֶּיךָ אֶשְׁמֹר אַל-תַּעַזְבֵנִי עַד-מְאֹד:
ט בַּמֶּה יְזַכֶּה-נַּעַר אֶת-אָרְחוֹ לִשְׁמֹר כִּדְבָרֶךָ:
י בְּכָל-לִבִּי דְרַשְׁתִּיךָ אַל-תַּשְׁגֵּנִי מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ:
יא בְּלִבִּי צָפַנְתִּי אִמְרָתְךָ לְמַעַן לֹא אֶחֱטָא-לָךְ:
יב בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה לַמְּדֵנִי חֻקֶּיךָ:
יג בִּשְׂפָתַי סִפַּרְתִּי כֹּל מִשְׁפְּטֵי-פִיךָ:

reason the Torah has NOT revealed the intent underlying the commandments is, that in the 2 verses in which the Torah did reveal this information, such as in the case cited, the wisest of men, Solomon, believing himself capable of avoiding the temptation the Torah warns against, erred. The Psalmist asks that since he is sincere in wishing to know the reasons behind the *mitzvot*, such knowledge should not become a stumbling block for him.

11. Whereas it is true that concerning ONE statute, namely the law about the red heifer, You have said *chuka chakakti, gezeyrah gazarti*, I have legislated a law, it is a decree, – do not try to unravel its meaning! I have kept Your words in my heart, locked up, and I have not made enquiries concerning it. (compare Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai Bamidbar Rabbah 19,1.)

12. But concerning all the OTHER statutes, *chukkim*, enquiry has NOT been forbidden, hence I bless You who teaches me Your statutes. After all, when we recite the benediction over the Torah in our daily prayers every morning we say "Cause the words of Your teachings to be sweet in our mouths... so that we, our offspring etc. may all know Your name and study Your teaching for its own sake". We conclude by blessing G'd who "teaches His Torah to His people Israel". Since the *chukkim* are part of the Torah and it is my duty and privilege to study Torah, – my blessing is that You teach me Torah!

13. The reason I request enlightenment concerning the *chukkim* rather than concerning the other commandments is, that the other categories of *mitzvot* I feel at home with, for instance all Your social laws are familiar to me since they were promulgated at Sinai.

14. Concerning the category of *eydot*, such as Sabbath and Holyday observances, I am also at ease. Although the evil urge begrudges the additional expense involved in observing these commandments, in those instances I enjoy spending just as much as I enjoy accumulating money on other occasions, i.e. *sassti ke-al kol hon*. I realize that money spent on Sabbath observance and the celebration of the *yamim tovim* will be reimbursed to me.

14*I rejoice over the way of Your decrees as over all riches.*
15*I study Your precepts; I regard Your ways;*
16*I take delight in Your laws; I will not neglect Your word.*
17*Deal kindly with Your servant, that I may live to keep Your word.*
18*Open my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of Your teaching.*
19*I am only a sojourner in the land; do not hide Your commandments from me.*
20*My soul is consumed with longing for Your rules at all times.*

15. Concerning Your *pikudim*, mandates reflecting Your attributes such as visiting the sick, burying the dead, i.e. acts of loving kindness, (our sages having pointed out that G'd visited Abraham after the circumcision, and personally buried Moses), the Psalmist says that he personally as king is not permitted to perform these duties. His image amongst the people would be demeaned if he were to take part in everyone's funeral for instance.

However, he derives his vicarious satisfaction from those commandments by *abita orchotecha*, observing Your ways O Lord. I may therefore be considered as if I had personally fulfilled those commandments.

16. I will certainly observe Your statutes even in the absence of understanding, they will be an unforgettable diversion for me however, once I know the reasons behind them. As long as my enlightenment is not from You, – I am apt to forget or neglect some aspects of the performance of those *chukkim*.

17. It is natural for an owner to want his slave to live, so that the slave can perform work for him. It is also natural for a slave to want to live, – but not in order to perform *avodah*, slave labour. David says "I am not like other slaves, I want to live in order to be able to observe Your commandments".

Or, – even after death, I ask to be resurrected in order to be able to serve You again in a physical setting, in a "normal" life on this earth.

18. It is a well known fact that Torah scholars are prevented from achieving certain insights simply because they are flesh and blood, because their souls are attached to a body. Once freed from the body, they acquire those insights. Seeing that David expressed the wish to be physically resurrected in order to perform *mitzvot*, he asks that G'd reveal the insights to him, that resurrection should not

יד בְּדֶרֶךְ עֵדְוֹתֶיךָ שַׂשְׂתִּי כְּעַל כָּל-הוֹן:
טו בְּפִקּוּדֶיךָ אָשִׂיחָה וְאַבִּיטָה אֹרְחֹתֶיךָ:
טז בְּחֻקֹּתֶיךָ אֶשְׁתַּעֲשָׁע לֹא אֶשְׁכַּח דְּבָרֶךָ:
יז גְּמֹל עַל-עַבְדְּךָ אֶחְיֶה וְאֶשְׁמְרָה דְבָרֶךָ:
יח גַּל-עֵינַי וְאַבִּיטָה נִפְלָאוֹת מִתּוֹרָתֶךָ:
יט גֵּר אָנֹכִי בָאָרֶץ אַל-תַּסְתֵּר מִמֶּנִּי מִצְוֹתֶיךָ:
כ גָּרְסָה נַפְשִׁי לְתַאֲבָה אֶל-מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ בְכָל-עֵת:

limit his understanding of G'd's Torah. When the Talmud Berachot 71, states that Torah scholars know no rest in this world and in the hereafter, it is because *yelchu me-chayil el chayil*, they will continue to advance intellectually even beyond the grave.

David does not want to lose the advantage of a purely spiritual existence after death, – once he is resurrected when the time comes.

19. A Torah scholar who achieves insights is so enthused and so eager to gain further insights, that in the process he is apt to forget or neglect the active pursuit of other *mitzvot*. Having asked G'd to *gal eynay*, open my eyes, David at the same time asks G'd for help not to commit this error.

I am a stranger on earth, i.e. I am so involved in eschatological studies, please do not hide from me Your commandments, i.e. the chance to perform them. This is also the assurance Rabbi Meir gives to those who occupy themselves with Torah *lishmah*, for a pure purpose in Avot 6,1. He says that such people will "merit" many things, among them *mekaravto leyad zechut*, will bring them to virtue. This means that such people will be granted the opportunity to perform the *mitzvot* which acquire those merits for them.

This is also the meaning of the statement (Peyah 1) that Torah study equals all other commandments combined. This means that it promotes the performance of all the commandments.

20. David describes how truly *arai*, transient he had become in his attitude to life on this earth (compare last verse). His soul is crushed, consumed with desire for *mishpatecha*, Your laws at any time. This is how much of a *ger* stranger I have become in this world, since I long for the afflictions which are the entrance fee to the *olam haba*, the hereafter.

21You blast the accursed insolent ones who stray from Your commandments.
22Take away from me taunt and abuse, because I observe Your decrees.
23Though princes meet and speak against me, Your servant studies Your laws.
24For Your decrees are my delight, my intimate companions.
25My soul clings to the dust; revive me in accordance with Your word.

If the word *garsah* means the same as *girsah*, acquired learning, then what David is saying is, "I am such a stranger on earth, so attached to spiritual matters" that though *ta-avah*, cravings is something that can be justified normally only at infrequent intervals, in this instance I crave for Your *mishpatecha* at all times.

21. Continuing the interpretation that David wishes for *yissurim*, afflictions as his entrance fee to the hereafter, he expresses concern that the fact that he suffers afflictions should not be interpreted as proof that he is being punished for sinful behaviour, especially his having taken Bat Sheva as a wife.

Such accusations, reinforced by David's personal afflictions would constitute a *chillul hashem*, desecration of G'd's name. Therefore he says "You have demonstrated Your anger against the habitual sinners – who attacked Moses and Aaron (Korach and his group), but not against the people who are only *shogim*, were misled by the argument that surely a house full of holy books should not need to have a *mezuzah* affixed to its doorposts.

22. David asks that just as G'd had removed any stigma i.e. *cherpah* from Moses and Aaron at the time, *gal me-alay*, remove insult and shame from me, for I have diligently observed Your *eydot*, testimonies, i.e. Bat Sheva had been divorced by her first husband Uriah when the latter had gone to war. Also, Uriah, her former husband had been guilty of rebellious conduct against David his king and had deserved execution. (compare Shabbat 56) The Talmud says "anyone who claims that David married Bat Sheva illegally, i.e. *chata*, that he sinned, is in error." The prophet Samuel I 18,14 states "David was successful in all his endeavors, and G'd remained with him". Is it conceivable that G'd would have remained with him if he had been guilty of a cardinal sin?

23. I have been so insulted, says David, that even part of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Court, *sarim*, spoke out against me, *bi*

כא גָּעַרְתָּ זֵדִים אֲרוּרִים הַשֹּׁגִים מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ:
כב גַּל מֵעָלַי חֶרְפָּה וָבוּז כִּי עֵדֹתֶיךָ נָצָרְתִּי:
כג גַּם יָשְׁבוּ שָׂרִים בִּי נִדְבָּרוּ עַבְדְּךָ יָשִׂיחַ בְּחֻקֶּיךָ:
כד גַּם-עֵדֹתֶיךָ שַׁעֲשָׁעַי אַנְשֵׁי עֲצָתִי:
כה דָּבְקָה לֶעָפָר נַפְשִׁי חַיֵּנִי כִּדְבָרֶךָ:

nidberu. All this while Your servant engages in discussing Your statutes, the laws of purification of *Nega-im*, certain stains on skin or garments or houses, as well as the laws of impurity covering roofed over airspaces, *oholot*.

24. At that time Your testimonies which I treated like my greatest delights, *sha-ashu-ay* were like my advisors. I refrained from executing those who had attacked me publicly as an adulterer, and who said that I was guilty of execution.

I could have pointed out that when an adulterer is executed his share in the hereafter is preserved, whereas if someone shames someone else in public, he loses his share in the hereafter. G'd has clearly stated (*eydut*) that if someone sheds someone else's blood, his own blood is to be shed, and that a person who shames another in public is as if he had spilled his blood. I had been aware of these testimonies. Yet I refrained from retaliating as I would have been entitled to, but was persuaded by my very studies of Your Torah to conclude that the perpetrators will suffer sufficiently by the *nega-im* character stains that they are guilty of and that cleave to them.

25. My own *nefesh* life force stuck to the dust. Since I am a reincarnation of Adam to whom G'd had said "you are dust and you will return to dust" (Genesis 3,19) Rabbi Achai son of Yoshia says (Talmud Shabbat 152) that the meaning of the above verse is that "this will occur one hour before the time of resurrection, after which resurrection would follow immediately." (a general human condition applicable not only to the wicked)

My own interpretation of this verse is as follows. "You will eat bread in the sweat of your brow, but this condition will last only till you die, seeing that you are dust and HAVE TO RETURN TO THE DUST. (to achieve your metamorphis). However, as soon as you have returned to the dust, you will no longer NEED to eat bread, will live like the angels. David is then saying that seeing he has suffered public shame, he is as if this condition of returning to the dust, i.e. dying, has already happened to him. Therefore he asks G'd *chayeni kidvarecha*, resurrect me in accordance with Your words!

26. In connection with the statement in Rosh Hashanah 17, that

[26]I have declared my way, and You have answered me; train me in Your laws.
[27]Make me understand the way of Your precepts, that I may study Your wondrous acts.
[28]I am racked with grief; sustain me in accordance with Your word.
[29]Remove all false ways from me; favor me with Your teaching.

G'd draped a prayer shawl, *talit* over Himself in the manner of a cantor and told "Moses that if he did so he would not return empty handed" (i.e. your prayers will find Me responsive), the *Livnot Hasapir* asked that how can we accept this, seeing that many people do not appear to receive an answer to their prayers even though they invoke the 13 attributes of G'd.

The author of the *Livnat Sapir* points out however, that the Talmud does not quote G'd as saying "say like this", but "do like this". The message is that if we emulate G'd's attributes by acting in a manner similar to His revealed attributes in our prayers, if man displays that he is merciful, – just as G'd is merciful etc., he can expect G'd's positive response when he prays out of distress.

David is saying to G'd that if He were to tell him that he is not yet of sufficiently refined character to be resurrected, he can achieve that refinement provided G'd answers him, *vata-aneni*, and teaches him His statutes, *lamdeyni chukecha*. Then when he TELLS of G'd's attributes, he will truly be able to say that they have also become his own ways, *sipparti derachay*, I will not only be telling *derachecha* Your ways, but I will have adopted them myself.

David reasons that if the adoption of the REVEALED attributes of G'd is so helpful that G'd will respond to man's supplication, how much more so would this be the case if he became privy to the more profound insights to be gained by understanding the *chukkim*. Therefore he asks "teach me Your *chukkim*. How much more would such knowledge assist me in refining my character!

27. If You were to say to me that I am not able to comprehend the profound meaning of these statures, *chukkim*, David says, I am quite content to receive the instruction in the same manner as Your other mandates, i.e. via the accepted method of *remez* and *sod*. (advanced methods of exegesis). This especially, since the entire Torah is made up of a combination of the letters in Your holy name. If You were only to explain the *chukkim*'s significance to me in those terms, my intellect would be able to absorb it. I will then become

כו דְּרָכַי סִפַּרְתִּי וַתַּעֲנֵנִי לַמְּדֵנִי חֻקֶּיךָ:
כז דֶּרֶךְ־פִּקּוּדֶיךָ הֲבִינֵנִי וְאָשִׂיחָה בְּנִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ:
כח דָּלְפָה נַפְשִׁי מִתּוּגָה קַיְּמֵנִי כִּדְבָרֶךָ:
כט דֶּרֶךְ־שֶׁקֶר הָסֵר מִמֶּנִּי וְתוֹרָתְךָ חָנֵּנִי:

refined in body and spirit, so that I can talk about Your marvels, i.e. the wonderful secrets, comparable to holy angels. (based on the statement of Rabbi Yochanan in Chagigah 14 that every word uttered by G'd creates an angel)

28. Should You say that this too is impossible until my soul has departed my body, and would be returned subsequently to resurrect me, and that to effect this resurrection before my physical death is impossible, I beg *dalpha nafshi*, infuse my soul (like intravenous feeding) to keep it going.

We have explained that while Moses spent 40 days on Mount Sinai prior to receiving the Torah from G'd directly, he was enabled to absorb this through a gradual process of spiritualization, without his first having to undergo physical death. The process had been similar to an incubation period of 40 days, was not complete until the last moment of those 40 days, else the tablets could have been received sooner and the sin of the golden calf would have been avoided altogether.

At any rate, the "leaking" i.e. *dalaf* of the breath of G'd's "mouth", kept Moses body alive and refined it. The Psalmist asks to have a similar experience as that of Moses on the mountain.

He begs that the quantity of *ruchniut*, spiritualization should be delivered in carefully measured doses to enable him to absorb same.

29. We read in Avot 6,4, "eat bread with salt, drink water by measure etc., i.e. live frugally. If G'd were to say that Moses' refinement of body was due to the simultaneous Torah study and non intake of normal food and drink, David asks G'd to remove the faulty belief i.e. *sheker* that one needs to enjoy the pleasures of this world. Once that mistaken philosophy has been removed, he believes he will be fit to be endowed *chaneyni* with G'd's Torah.

30. He refers to having asked to know and understand the 6 categories that the oral Torah is divided into. The prophet Isaiah in 33,6, hints at these categories of the *Torah shel baal peh* when he says "and faith and knowledge shall be the stability of your times, and strength of salvation, the fear of the Lord is his treasure." Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish in Shabbat 31, explains that "faith", *emunah*, refers

30I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I have set Your rules before me.
31I cling to Your decrees; O LORD, do not put me to shame.
32I eagerly pursue Your commandments, for You broaden my understanding.
33Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your laws; I will observe them to the utmost.
34Give me understanding, that I may observe Your teaching and keep it wholeheartedly.

to the tractate *zera-im*, plants etc. which require the farmer's faith that his sowing and planting will result in an eventual harvest. *Ittecha*, your times, refers to the tractate *mo-ed*, dealing with the laws and timing of our festivals. *chossen*, strength would refer to the tractate *nashim*, laws about marriage, divorce etc. *Yeshuot*, salvation would refer to the tractate of *nezikin*, dealing with civil law, how to ensure a smoothly working civilization. *Chochmat* and *da-at* would refer to the tractates of *kodoshin* and *taharot* respectively, which require greater insights, the tractates dealing with laws of sacrifices, temple service and the laws of purity and impurity, neither of which category is easily accessible to logical deductions.

David does not ask to be granted insights concerning ALL the 6 categories of the oral Torah. He is certain that he has mastered some categories, such as *emunah*, i.e. the tractate concerning plants. He is not afraid that he will forget that category. Also concerning *mishpatecha*, i.e. the tractate *nezikin* he considers himself competent in through ample practical experience, as he had mentioned in verse 13. The word *shiviti* would be equivalent to *shaveh*, worth, equal to.

31. Also concerning the tractate *moed*, David does not ask for special enlightenment, since *davakti be-eydotecha*, I have cleaved to Your testimonies, i.e. the group of laws comprising Sabbaths, festivals, commemorating the Exodus, as well as testifying to the fact that G'd had created the universe ex nihilo in 6 days.

However, concerning the tractate *nashim* laws about marriage and divorce, David does ask enlightenment, and says "do not put me to shame". He is afraid that if he had failed to correctly understand even part of those laws he would feel ashamed since he would have to conclude that his involvement with Bat Sheva had been the CAUSE that he had not mastered that tractate.

32. He certainly asks enlightenment regarding the tractates

ל דֶּרֶךְ אֱמוּנָה בָּחָרְתִּי מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ שִׁוִּיתִי׃
לא דָּבַקְתִּי בְעֵדוֹתֶיךָ יְהוָה אַל-תְּבִישֵׁנִי׃
לב דֶּרֶךְ-מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אָרוּץ כִּי תַרְחִיב לִבִּי׃
לג הוֹרֵנִי יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ חֻקֶּיךָ וְאֶצְּרֶנָּה עֵקֶב׃
לד הֲבִינֵנִי וְאֶצְּרָה תוֹרָתֶךָ וְאֶשְׁמְרֶנָּה בְכָל-לֵב׃

kodoshin and *taharot*, the ones described by Isaiah as *chochmat vedaat*. David asks for enlightenment so he can "run", *derech mitzvotecha*, on the path of Your commandments, rather than that he would get bogged down trying to comprehend them. *Tarchiv libi*, expand my heart's ability to comprehend.

33. David now turns to the performance aspect of the commandments. We have learned in Mishnah Avot 4,2 "that the reward for performing a *mitzvah* is the opportunity to perform yet another *mitzvah*". In our commentary on the beginning of Parshat Eikev, we referred to the meaning of Deut. 7,12 "as a result of Your listening to My social laws... AND the Lord... will KEEP for you the covenant".

At that point the Torah should have said *Yishmor hashem*, i.e. G'd will keep, or will guard. Instead the Torah writes *veshamar*, "AND He will keep". The principal reward for "listening" is that one will actually perform the commandments. The *mitzvah* of listening leads to performance. Apart from this, – reward is not received in this life.

This is also what David has in mind when he says "teach me", so that as a result, i.e. *eikev*, I can observe it to the utmost degree, *etzarenah*.

34. Preparation for the observance of the commandments is the elimination of hindrances, such as forgetting what one has learned, or the need for a middleman. Hence, I beg, *havineni*, grant ME the insight into Your Torah which will accomplish 2 things. 1) I will diligently observe the positive commandments, not like something that has been learned from outsiders, easy to forget. 2) Having engrossed myself deeply in the studies, I will not fall prey to those who would interfere with my wholehearted observance of the negative commandments.

35. Not only will I refrain from transgressing, but guide me along the "narrow" path, i.e. *netiv* of Your commandments, i.e. the minutiae of observances over and above the minimum observances required. This is my true desire, *chafetz*, though it is not strictly my duty.

35*Lead me in the path of Your commandments, for that is my concern.*
36*Turn my heart to Your decrees and not to love of gain.*
37*Avert my eyes from seeing falsehood; by Your ways preserve me.*
38*Fulfill Your promise to Your servant, which is for those who worship You.*
39*Remove the taunt that I dread, for Your rules are good.*
40*See, I have longed for Your precepts; by Your righteousness preserve me.*
41*May Your steadfast love reach me, O LORD, Your deliverance, as You have promised.*

Unless I have Your guidance, it is too easy to abandon this desire to go beyond what is actually demanded.

36. "Incline my heart", i.e. my intention towards Your testimonies. I want to observe these *mitzvot* as demonstrations of my faith, not with a view to reward in the hereafter, or even the dividends that might accrue to me in this life.

37. Should You say that if You turn away my eyes from evil, I could not claim credit for being righteous, the Psalmist says "do not be surprised, that I wish to live according to Your ways". After all it is Your own (G'd's) method as expressed in Habbakuk 1,13 "of pure eyes, unable to view evil", whereas Psalms 1,6, states "the way of the wicked will perish", will result in his disappearance from His Presence.

38. Our sages (Nidah 30) have stated that before the formation of the embryo G'd decrees whether the child to be born will be rich, poor, strong weak etc.; He does NOT decree whether that particular human being will be wicked or righteous, however. David says that he knows he could not ask to be made righteous, since this does not lie within the province of heaven as expressed by the Talmud in Nidah. Tossafot in Megillah 25, bases all this on the line in Jeremiah 9,22 "let not the rich boast of his wealth or the strong of his strength". What the prophet is saying is that since those attributes have been decreed before birth, no one can claim credit for possessing them.

David does not ask that such endowments as You G'd HAVE decreed for Your servant i.e. *imratecha*, maintain for me, as they will lead to *yiratecha*, reverence for You.

39. However, concerning another fear, namely that Your judgments, the afflictions, *mishpatecha* would make me afraid and

לה הַדְרִיכֵנִי בִּנְתִיב מִצְוֹתֶיךָ כִּי-בוֹ חָפָצְתִּי:
לו הַט-לִבִּי אֶל-עֵדְוֹתֶיךָ וְאַל אֶל-בָּצַע:
לז הַעֲבֵר עֵינַי מֵרְאוֹת שָׁוְא בִּדְרָכֶךָ חַיֵּנִי:
לח הָקֵם לְעַבְדְּךָ אִמְרָתֶךָ אֲשֶׁר לְיִרְאָתֶךָ:
לט הַעֲבֵר חֶרְפָּתִי אֲשֶׁר יָגֹרְתִּי כִּי מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ טוֹבִים:
מ הִנֵּה תָּאַבְתִּי לְפִקּוּדֶיךָ בְּצִדְקָתְךָ חַיֵּנִי:
מא וְיָבֹאנִי חַסְדֶּךָ יְהוָה תְּשׁוּעָתְךָ כְּאִמְרָתֶךָ:

this would be *cherpi*, my shame, – I ask that You should make it pass. Then I can rejoice and accept Your disciplining me as something good, i.e. *tovim*. (We have explained that a person who acts or looks fearful is presumed to be sinful).

Possibly, David refers to the promise/threat of G'd in Samuel II 7,12, "I will raise your seed after you and will establish his kingdom, – and if the latter should sin, Samuel continues in verse 14 "I will chasten him with the rod of men and the plagues that humans are prone to". David asks that his offspring (Solomon) be treated likewise, so that he will revere G'd properly.

My fear concerning my son's future conduct *yagorti* is my shame *cherpati*, – remove and forgive my shame.

I should not have feared concerning what You said you might do to him (Samuel II 7,14), since I should have realized that Your chastening is good.

40. Having asked G'd to grant him the *hachanah*, state of preparedness to fulfil the *mitzvot*, he repeats that his motivation is only for the *mitzvot*'s own sake *ta-avti lipkudecha* – because I am aware that my very life *chayeni* is only due to an act of *tzedaka* charity by You.

41. We have explained in connection with the Mishnah in Avot 1,3, in which Antignos taught "not to be like servants who serve the Master for the sake of the reward", that he did NOT mean (as Tzadok and Beyssus understood him) that one should WANT to forego any reward. This would be pointless anyways, since G'd who has promised a reward would certainly not fail to pay such reward. Antignos' meaning had merely been that *mitzvah* performance should not be reward oriented.

David says "I have stated in the last verse that MY *mitzvah* performance is NOT reward oriented, but that I consider reward as an act of charity, not something to be claimed as a due". He says

42I shall have an answer for those who taunt me, for I have put my trust in Your word.
43Do not utterly take the truth away from my mouth, for I have put my hope in Your rules.
44I will always obey Your teaching, forever and ever.
45I will walk about at ease, for I have turned to Your precepts.

that he does not want to be misunderstood as meaning that G'd will fail to pay the reward. *Viyvo-uni chassadecha*, I KNOW that these acts of Your kindness will come to me. David refers to G'd's previous promise to him (Samuel II 7,16) "your throne will be firmly established forever". He knows that he would become the Messiah, that redemption would come through him as a result of G'd's promise.

42. It is this promise that enables me to answer my detractors, *chorpi*, those who taunt me. If someone sarcastically asks me the penalty for committing adultery (having in mind my marriage to Bat Sheva), I will answer that such person should die by strangulation, without however forfeiting his share in the hereafter. I know this since I believe in Your words as expressed in the above quoted vision of the prophet Nathan. It says there concerning David, "you will lie with your forefathers", i.e. you will JOIN your forefathers in the hereafter". (Samuel II 7,12.)

43. We know from Bereshit Rabbah 92,1, that one of the ways to determine if the afflictions one suffers are due to one's sins or are *yissurim shel ahavah*, afflictions of love, is, if the afflictions are of the kind which interfere with the victim's ability to study Torah. We also know that these afflictions are one of the ways to acquire one's share in the hereafter. David says that he is certain of his share in the hereafter through the afflictions he is suffering; he is also confident that while undergoing these afflictions his Torah studies will not be interrupted, i.e. *al tetze mipi devar emet*, don't take the word of truth out of my mouth.

The reason he is confident is that he considers his afflictions as a sign of G'd's love for him. They could not be otherwise, i.e. punishments, since *lemishpatecha yacholti*, I have always waited anxiously for opportunities to fulfil Your ordinances".

In this respect he is like Rabbi Eliazar son of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai who awaited afflictions, welcoming them saying "come my brothers".

44. We find that some prominent scholars made a point of reviewing their studies when they felt themselves to be close to

מב וְאֶעֱנֶה חֹרְפִי דָבָר כִּי-בָטַחְתִּי בִּדְבָרֶךָ:
מג וְאַל-תַּצֵּל מִפִּי דְבַר-אֱמֶת עַד-מְאֹד כִּי לְמִשְׁפָּטְךָ יִחָלְתִּי:
מד וְאֶשְׁמְרָה תוֹרָתְךָ תָמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:
מה וְאֶתְהַלְכָה בָרְחָבָה כִּי פִקֻּדֶיךָ דָרָשְׁתִּי:

death. They understood the meaning of the verse in Proverbs 10,3 "G'd will not starve the soul of the righteous – whereas the very substance of the wicked He will ward off", to mean that after death the righteous will be held responsible for any of their learning they had allowed themselves to forget. Our sages are also on record as saying "hail the man who has arrived at this point with his Talmud intact. (Midrash Shemuel 10,1) This is why David expresses the hope that G'd's Torah should never be absent from his mouth, and in this verse he adds that he should be able to preserve it *eshmerah*, forever. Rabbi Meir in his interpretation of Genesis 1,31 "and here G'd saw all that He had made, and it was very good", interpreted the *tov me-od*, very good to mean that G'd included "death" as a positive creation. (Midrash Hagadol on that verse) What he meant was that the reason G'd views death as a positive accomplishment is, that without the threat of death no one would do *teshuvah*, repentance.

By not forgetting one's learning during one's lifetime, David would not have to reconstruct it prior to his death, and cause the angel of death to have to wait until he had accomplished this.

45. Our sages in the Zohar have defined the expression *hit-halech* (as distinct from *halach*) as a sort of *tiyul*, promenade, walking while at ease, leisurely. (Torat Kohanim 26,12) The *Shechinah* is described as *mit-halechet* with the righteous in *gan eden*, i.e. it leads the righteous at midnight to listen to subjects of Torah study to be heard from the mouth of the righteous (who are in the hereafter). Similarly our rabbis in Sanhedrin 102 state that G'd offered Jeroboam ben Nevot a chance to retract, promising to walk with him and David, in *gan eden*.

David wanted to emphasize that he had ALWAYS walked the path of truth, *birchavah*, (in this instance equivalent to the English "the straight and the narrow") Therefore, David is certain of G'd's company. At the same time, knowing that in his pursuit of halachic rulings he had always searched profoundly, – his halachic pronouncements were accepted. This in contrast to others, who, – though they pursued Torah knowledge, and could therefore apply to

46I will speak of Your decrees, and not be ashamed in the presence of kings.
47I will delight in Your commandments, which I love.
48I reach out for Your commandments, which I love; I study Your laws.
49Remember Your word to Your servant through which You have given me hope.
50This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your promise has preserved me.
51Though the arrogant have cruelly mocked me, I have not swerved from Your teaching.
52I remember Your rules of old, O LORD, and find comfort in them.

themselves the principle of *eylu ve-eylu divrey elokim chayim*, – nonetheless did not find the result of their studies reflected in normative Jewish practice. (halachah)

This is another meaning of *barechavah*, i.e. the path accepted by the majority, the consensus. The "others" David has in mind are Jeroboam who was an outstanding Torah scholar according to all our sources.

46. I am not embarrassed to face kings, i.e. Torah scholars in the hereafter, – and to defend my interpretations of *eydotecha*, Your testimonies.

47. Every person displays preference for some of G'd's commandments over others in his life. This is natural, and related to the different psychological makeup of different people. In the hereafter, David expects to derive particular delight, i.e. *va-eshtahsha* from those commandments he had performed in this life with special zeal.

48. Hopefully, when I raise my hands in supplication to the angels who cleave to me as a result of the exuberance with which I fulfilled those commandments which were especially dear to me, I will be granted the insight also to discuss Your *chukkim* intelligently in the presence of the angels mentioned in verse 46. (*melachim* as *malachim*)

49. Our sages in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 28 explained the verse in Genesis 15,11 "the vulture (eagle) descended on the carcasses and Abraham chased it away", as David being the vulture referred to and the carcasses representing the nations who would rule over Israel in exile. David wanted to destroy those nations to forestall the possibility of their exiling us. Abraham, in preventing David, (deferring

מו וַאֲדַבְּרָה בְעֵדֹתֶיךָ נֶגֶד מְלָכִים וְלֹא אֵבוֹשׁ:
מז וְאֶשְׁתַּעַשַׁע בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר אָהָבְתִּי:
מח וְאֶשָּׂא כַפַּי אֶל-מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר אָהַבְתִּי וְאָשִׂיחָה בְחֻקֶּיךָ:
מט זְכָר-דָּבָר לְעַבְדֶּךָ עַל אֲשֶׁר יִחַלְתָּנִי:
נ זֹאת נֶחָמָתִי בְעָנְיִי כִּי אִמְרָתְךָ חִיָּתְנִי:
נא זֵדִים הֱלִיצֻנִי עַד-מְאֹד מִתּוֹרָתְךָ לֹא נָטִיתִי:
נב זָכַרְתִּי מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ מֵעוֹלָם יְהוָה וָאֶתְנֶחָם:

his action till evening, meaning the end of the normal historical cycle envisioned by G'd) in effect selected those nations as the ones who would rule Israel during the various exiles. Had G'd granted David's request "I will pursue my enemies and overtake them and not return till they have perished", He would have thwarted Abraham's intention.

G'd made David wait till the end of the time allocated (till the messianic age) when he would fulfil David's request, as He said (Psalms 2,8) "ask of Me and I will give the nations of the earth to be your inheritance and your possessions till the end of the earth.. – "But you must break them with an iron rod." This verse refers to the times of the Messiah.

David here refers to this promise of G'd *asher yichaltani* which You have made me hope for. All this is merely part of David's conviction that he will enjoy life in the hereafter.

50. These words of G'd have been my comfort in my present state of *onyi*, distress, only Your words keep me alive. When I look at my poverty – how I have to flee from king Saul and have to forage for food, I am considered like dead, since a poor man is compared to a dead man. (Avodah Zarah 5) *Imrotecha*, You have said to Abraham that "I have found My servant David", long before I was born. Your statement assured me of birth, – as otherwise I might have been stillborn.

The reference is to Psalms 89,20–21. In view of all this, David says "I am well off in my poverty, since the alternative would have been never to have seen the light of day at all.

51–52. Not only this, but even if sinners have mocked me greatly, causing me great difficulties, I have NOT deviated from Your Torah. The reason is that I remembered that Your judgments have always been rooted in Your attribute of mercy, and this has been my comfort.

53I am seized with rage because of the wicked who forsake Your teaching.
54Your laws are a source of strength to me wherever I may dwell.
55I remember Your name at night, O LORD, and obey Your teaching.
56This has been my lot, for I have observed Your precepts.
57The LORD is my portion; I have resolved to keep Your words.
58I have implored You with all my heart; have mercy on me, in accordance with Your promise.
59I have considered my ways, and have turned back to your decrees.

53. Of all the wicked people I have not been afraid of any as much as of those who forsook Your Torah, *ozvey Toratecha*, i.e. renegades who used to be Torah observant. The Talmud in Pessachim 49 tells us that of all the *reshaim*, wicked people, none are as hateful to a *talmid chacham*, an observant scholar as the ones who have abandoned the path of Torah after previously observing Torah laws.

54. David says that while I had to be in hiding in my wanderings and was afraid that G'd would not interfere with the free will of my antagonists, and that my escape therefore would be doubtful, – I preoccupied myself with the *chukkim*, the statutes, to such an extent that they became like songs for me in the place of my refuge and fear. I reasoned that though I did not see logic in the *chukkim*, that the merit of studying them and observing them would counteract the endeavors of the free willed people trying to kill me even though I could not see the logical connection between the study of *chukkim* and interference with those who planned my death.

55. At night, when asleep, when I did not study the *chukkim*, I remembered Your name – such as "hear O Israel" and other verses to be recited at night to ward off the fears which are common to night time, and I observed Your Torah when I rose at midnight the most important hour for exulting in Torah.

56. It was the exclusive *pikudecha* aspects of Your Torah, the *gemilut chassadim*, performance of loving kindness, which are so typical of You and which I emulated, that eventually saved me. As an act of *midah keneged midah*, compensation for the manner in which

נג זַלְעָפָה אֲחָזַתְנִי מֵרְשָׁעִים עֹזְבֵי תּוֹרָתֶיךָ: זְמִירוֹת
הָיוּ-לִי חֻקֶּיךָ בְּבֵית מְגוּרָי:
נה זָכַרְתִּי בַלַּיְלָה שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה וָאֶשְׁמְרָה תּוֹרָתֶךָ:
נו זֹאת הָיְתָה-לִּי כִּי פִקֻּדֶיךָ נָצָרְתִּי:
נז חֶלְקִי יְהוָה אָמַרְתִּי לִשְׁמֹר דְּבָרֶיךָ:
נח חִלִּיתִי פָנֶיךָ בְכָל-לֵב חָנֵּנִי כְּאִמְרָתֶךָ:
נט חִשַּׁבְתִּי דְרָכָי וָאָשִׁיבָה רַגְלַי אֶל-עֵדֹתֶיךָ:

I had practiced loving kindness, – You treated me with loving kindness.

57. It is a well known fact that anything which was part of a whole has an inner urge to be reunited with the whole it has once been part of. This is why when one throws earth or stones into the air, heavenwards, they always fall back to earth and lose their upward momentum. This is also why flames strive upwards, the origin of fire being above. We also know that the human spirit (soul) is part of the Divine. It would be natural therefore that the spirit yearns to be reunited with G'd more than G'd yearns to cleave to us (the part).

Nonetheless we find that this is NOT so. G'd appears at least 10 times more eager to adhere to us than we are to adhere to Him. In fact G'd behaves like "the part" then, rather than like "the whole".

David is saying that in order to overcome the opposition of his *yetzer hara* evil urge for him to cleave to G'd, he had to reverse the true state of affairs and to describe G'd as being *chelki*, part of me, instead of vice versa. I did this only in order to rationalize my effort to remain loyal to You and *lishmor devarecha* to keep Your instructions. I had to invert the truth in order to counter the argument of my evil urge, describing myself as central.

58. I obviously remained aware that this is not the true state of affairs. Proof is that I kept anxiously seeking Your countenance, involving even my *yetzer hara*, evil urge, i.e. *bechol lev* with the entire heart; *chanayni*, be gracious to me! I am aware that I have NO CLAIM on You, but I beg to belong to that group of whom You have said *vechanoti et asher achon*, "I will be gracious to whomsoever I choose to be gracious to". (Exodus 33,19), My yardsticks are only known to Me and need not include only those who possess some merit.

59. The fact that I schemed to make You appear as "my part" helped me to acquire the desire to abandon any of my private concerns in favour of being busy only with Your concerns. It forced

60*I have hurried and not delayed to keep Your commandments.*
61*Though the bonds of the wicked are coiled round me, I have not neglected Your teaching.*
62*I arise at midnight to praise You for Your just rules.*
63*I am a companion to all who fear You, to those who keep Your precepts.*
64*Your steadfast love, O LORD, fills the earth; teach me Your laws.*
65*You have treated Your servant well, according to Your word, O LORD.*
66*Teach me good sense and knowledge, for I have put my trust in Your commandments.*

my feet to turn towards places of Your Torah (which is called *eydut* without the letter *vav*)

60. In order not to have second thoughts, and also due to my enthusiasm, I hastened to Your testimonies by turning my feet around unhesitatingly. I did not delay, meaning that I did not await *mitzvah* opportunities to come my way, but I hastened in search of such opportunities, went in search of them. (*Shemirah* is the lower level of observance, something that implies passivity)

61. Although my detractors, who accused me of adultery – might have made me turn to Torah study so that through my anger at them I would not forget any of my studies – this was NOT the reason. I was NEVER in fear of forgetting my learning, I loved Your commandments too much for that.

62. I humbled my evil urge so much that I arose regularly at midnight to thank You for Your judgments. It is kabbalistic tradition that until midnight the *Shechinah* apportions judgments in the world. It is appropriate then to thank G'd for the fair justice, i.e. *mishpetey tzidkecha* He has meted out till midnight of each day.

63. David does not use *yerey-echa*, those who fear you, but *yereyucha* (past tense). He is a companion not only to those who are *shomrey pikudecha* are presently observing Your mandates. The Zohar tells that each midnight the *Shechinah* enters *gan eden* and meets with the souls of the righteous departed who are busy studying Torah. If the righteous of this world rise at that time and busy themselves with Torah, one listens to them in the celestial regions and establishes a bond with them.

It follows that such people become *chaverim*, companions of all

ס חַשְׁתִּי וְלֹא הִתְמַהְמָהְתִּי לִשְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתֶיךָ׃
סא חֶבְלֵי רְשָׁעִים עִוְּדֻנִי תּוֹרָתְךָ לֹא שָׁכָחְתִּי׃
סב חֲצוֹת-לַיְלָה אָקוּם לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ עַל מִשְׁפְּטֵי צִדְקֶךָ׃
סג חָבֵר אֲנִי לְכָל-אֲשֶׁר יְרֵאוּךָ וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי פִקּוּדֶיךָ׃
סד חַסְדְּךָ יְהוָה מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ חֻקֶּיךָ לַמְּדֵנִי׃
סה טוֹב עָשִׂיתָ עִם-עַבְדְּךָ יְהוָה כִּדְבָרֶךָ׃
סו טוּב טַעַם וָדַעַת לַמְּדֵנִי כִּי בְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ הֶאֱמָנְתִּי׃

the departed *tzaddikim*. This is why David says "I want to rise at midnight.. and then become a *chaver* to all those who have revered You (past tense) and those who presently keep Your commandments.

The word *lechol*, all, is missing here, since not all those who revere G'd trouble themselves to get up at midnight to commune with G'd like David.

64. It follows that the kindness You perform with the *tzaddikim* in the hereafter also fills this earth, enables me to be on the same wavelength as the *tzaddikim* in the hereafter except in the area of understanding the *chukkim*.

Therefore, I ask, please teach me the *chukkim* to enable me to be a true *chaver*, companion to them in all respects.

65. David assumes that G'd will respond that He did not grant him so little wisdom. He claims that what he has in mind is not basic understanding of the *chukkim*, something he has mastered in most areas except that of the red heifer legislation. Concerning the latter, even Solomon the wisest of men said "I thought I could become wise, – but wisdom is far from me". (Eccles. 7,23.)

However, says David the wisdom I do have I cannot claim as an accomplishment since *lidvarecha*, it came to me as part of Your decree prior to my birth, it is not an achievement on my part.

66. I want to know the deeper meaning of the *chukkim*. In the event that I have already comprehended all that my limited intellect is capable of, I beg to be granted an expanded intellect. If I were to ask for this in order to fortify my faith, I could see why it would be impossible. Since I have however demonstrated already that I have faith in You through performance of other *mitzvot*, – my request is not related to my faith one way or another.

67. David admits that perhaps he should not have asked G'd to reveal to him what He had obviously wanted to hide. Granted also

67*Before I was humbled I went astray, but now I keep Your word.*
68*You are good and beneficent; teach me Your laws.*
69*Though the arrogant have accused me falsely, I observe Your precepts wholeheartedly.*
70*Their minds are thick like fat; as for me, Your teaching is my delight.*
71*It was good for me that I was humbled, so that I might learn Your laws.*
72*I prefer the teaching You proclaimed to thousands of gold and silver pieces.*
73*Your hands made me and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn Your commandments.*

that it would be more meritorious to keep the *chukkim* BECAUSE one does not understand them.

Nonetheless, the error of asking had already been committed, *terem e-eneh ani shogeg*, I afflicted myself, bothered myself, committed this error, – now however do not turn me away empty handed. I am awaiting Your reply, *imratecha shamarti*. (The word *shamar* is used here in the same sense as Jacob used it in Genesis 37,11.)

68. There is an additional reason You should not deny my request, says David. Seeing You are *tov*, good, You would not have denied me OTHER requests of a personal nature, had I voiced them. Since, however I have refrained from asking for anything other than that You should teach me the meaning of Your statutes, You should grant me my request.

We know from Solomon, who had asked to be granted insights necessary ot make him a good judge and ruler, that G'd granted this wish BECAUSE he had NOT asked for material goods. (compare Kings I 3,5–14.) Should you tell me that I can learn much of this material from Doag and Achitofel, who are reputed to have been the leading Torah scholars in the field of understanding laws of purity and impurity, (Sanhedrin 106) David says that he refuses to accept their teachings since they had declared him unfit as a member of the Jewish community due to his Moabite descent. They had also accused him of adultery, i.e. with the wife of Uriah. Since in both instances they deliberately falsified halachah, normative Jewish practice, how could they be trustworthy in other disciplines of the *Torah shel baal peh*, oral law?

סז טֶרֶם אֶעֱנֶה אֲנִי שֹׁגֵג וְעַתָּה אִמְרָתְךָ שָׁמָרְתִּי׃
סח טוֹב-אַתָּה וּמֵטִיב לַמְּדֵנִי חֻקֶּיךָ׃
סט טָפְלוּ עָלַי שֶׁקֶר זֵדִים אֲנִי בְּכָל-לֵב אֶצֹּר פִּקּוּדֶיךָ׃
ע טָפַשׁ כַּחֵלֶב לִבָּם אֲנִי תוֹרָתְךָ שִׁעֲשָׁעְתִּי׃
עא טוֹב-לִי כִּי-עֻנֵּיתִי לְמַעַן אֶלְמַד חֻקֶּיךָ׃
עב טוֹב-לִי תוֹרַת-פִּיךָ מֵאַלְפֵי זָהָב וָכָסֶף׃
עג יָדֶיךָ עָשׂוּנִי וַיְכוֹנְנוּנִי הֲבִינֵנִי וְאֶלְמְדָה מִצְוֹתֶיךָ׃

The only people from whom one should study Torah are those that are comparable to an angel of G'd in their sincerity. Better he should remain ignorant, says David, than to have to study Torah from the likes of them.

Better I should continue to observe Your mandates with all my heart. Their heart is as blunt as fat, i.e. they have already forgotten all their Torah knowledge. (Avodah Zarah 2)

David contrasts his own experience saying not only does he delight in the pursuit of Torah, but Torah itself has become his delight. (He does not say *Be-toratcha*, but *Toratcha*)

69. My request is not due to the wicked people who keep telling me to abandon these *chukkim*, that they are devoid of logic, senseless, and who hope to persuade me to abandon Your *chukkim*. After all, they have already done so to no avail, I have continued to observe Your mandates whole heartedly.

70. Neither is my objective to convince the sinners of the merit and logic in these *chukkim*. Their heart is far too full of unholy matter to understand this. Even assuming they would understand it intellectually, they would not appreciate it since only I have made Your Torah my delight.

71. Should You say that the reason that I am so insistent in obtaining this knowledge is because of the investment I have in studying it, and that I do not want to return empty handed from all this effort, I am quite satisfied, *tov li*, that the very effort and self denial I have expended on this study will stand me in good stead. (even without visible results) I would certainly NOT consider the time and effort as wasted.

72. The reason I am so insistent is only because it is *Torat Picha*, and as such worth more than thousands of silver and gold pieces.

73. Since both the *chukkim* are Your creation and I myself am the product of Your hands, i.e. You personally had a hand in creating me,

[74]Those who fear You will see me and rejoice, for I have put my hope in Your word.
[75]I know, O LORD, that Your rulings are just; rightly have You humbled me.
[76]May Your steadfast love comfort me in accordance with Your promise to Your servant.
[77]May Your mercy reach me, that I might live, for Your teaching is my delight.
[78]Let the insolent be dismayed, for they have wronged me without cause; I will study Your precepts.
[79]May those who fear You, those who know Your decrees, turn again to me.

(*na-asseh Adam*, let US make Adam) and You have readied me, (for important tasks) grant me the understanding to learn Your *mitzvot*. (David was afraid that the very fact that he is part matter may diminish his intellectual capacity).

74. Our sages view the verses 74–79 as referring to the fact that David suffered from *tzora-at* the dreaded skin disease, and to his plea to be healed from this. He hopes that those who see him in this condition will rejoice when they see him cured, since it will prove that he had been loyal to G'd all the time, that the affliction had not been the result of sin but was *yissurim shel ahavah*, tribulations attesting to G'd's love for him.

We know that there is no way of curing disease inflicted by G'd for sinfulness until G'd is ready to cure the victim, whereas those that can be healed at will (by an outsider) are signs of G'd's love for the person afflicted. We also know that another way of distinguishing between *yissurim shel ahavah* and the other kind, is the afflicted person's ability to continue Torah study without hindrance.

We read in Berachot 5 that when Rabbi Chiyah bar Abba was sick and Rabbi Yochanan went to visit him, he told Rabbi Yochanan that he did not want *yissurim shel ahavah*, nor afflictions due to his sins. Rabbi Yochanan asked him to give him his hand and he was cured immediately. This shows that *yissurim shel ahavah* can be removed by man (certain great men) at will, as opposed to the *yissurim* of the other variety. They cannot however, be removed by the victim himself singlehandedly, hence neither Rabbi Chiyah nor Rabbi Yochanan did so by themselves but in conjunction with someone else.

David is saying that his afflictions too are *yissurim shel ahavah*, since he was a man of faith. This was a well known fact which he had demonstrated by his behaviour described in Samuel II, 5,23–25.

עד יִרְאֶיךָ יִרְאוּנִי וְיִשְׂמָחוּ כִּי לִדְבָרְךָ יִחָלְתִּי׃
עה יָדַעְתִּי יְהוָה כִּי-צֶדֶק מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ וֶאֱמוּנָה עִנִּיתָנִי׃
עו יְהִי-נָא חַסְדְּךָ לְנַחֲמֵנִי כְּאִמְרָתְךָ לְעַבְדֶּךָ׃
עז יְבֹאוּנִי רַחֲמֶיךָ וְאֶחְיֶה כִּי-תוֹרָתְךָ שַׁעֲשֻׁעָי׃
עח יֵבֹשׁוּ זֵדִים כִּי-שֶׁקֶר עִוְּתוּנִי אֲנִי אָשִׂיחַ בְּפִקֻּדֶיךָ׃
עט יָשׁוּבוּ לִי יְרֵאֶיךָ וְיֹדְעֵו עֵדֹתֶיךָ׃

He had shown extreme faith in holding back counterattacking the Philistines. His soldiers had been very much aware of this, and therefore knew of his great trust in G'd. In the end they rejoiced at David's display of faith.

David also knew that the fact that his Torah study proceeded without interruption was proof that he was not being punished.

75. He says that even though he knew that G'd's judgments are just, – even when they are imposed as a punishment for sins committed, – but in this instance he is certain that his afflictions are NOT sin related.

76. Having said this and being aware that he can ask for the afflictions to be removed, – he knows they are an act of kindness which will result in his being comforted. The Talmud Baba Batra 15 identifies *eytan haezrachi* in Psalms 89,1 as Abraham. In verse 5 in that same Psalm, Abraham refers to an assurance by G'd that his descendant, i.e. David, would become the redeemer.

David says that that promise which would eventually increase his reward is NOT what he is interested in at the moment.

77. He is asking "may Your mercy (as opposed to Your kindness) come upon me so that I shall survive, – i.e. be cured from this disease – which is equivalent to death – while it afflicts a person. "I know it is not because of my sin that I am afflicted, since even in this state I continue to make Your Torah my delight"

78. I also know that my detractors are wilful sinners since they have not concluded that my continued abiiity to study and discuss Torah are proof that I was not afflicted for any sins. Had they been correct in their accusations of me, I would not have been able to do so.

79. The reason I ask to be cured is only so that all those who revere You G'd, will again become my companions.

80. In the event that You will not cure me, – I ask that my heart remain faithful to Your statutes anyways, so that the fact that I was

80May I wholeheartedly follow Your laws so that I do not come to grief.
81I long for Your deliverance; I hope for Your word.
82My eyes pine away for Your promise; I say, "When will You comfort me?"
83Though I have become like a water-skin dried in smoke, I have not neglected Your laws.
84How long has Your servant to live? when will You bring my persecutors to judgment?
85The insolent have dug pits for me, flouting Your teaching.
86All Your commandments are enduring; I am persecuted without cause; help me!
87Though they almost wiped me off the earth, I did not abandon Your precepts.
88As befits Your steadfast love, preserve me, so that I may keep the decree You proclaimed.

not cured will not become the source of my shame. Just as I am content without knowing the reason behind Your *chukkim*, I would be content not knowing the reason for my bodily afflictions.

81. I waited anxiously, *yichalti*, for the *yeshuah* salvation of Your *Shechinah*, which will occur at the time of the redemption. Since Your *Shechinah* is in need of redemption as long as *yad al kess Koh*, Amalek is actively opposing You, I do not want my PERSONAL fortunes to appear as more important than the fate of Your *Shechinah*.

82. Proof of my overriding concern for Your reputation was my conduct in the fight against the Philistines, (Samuel II 5,23–25) referred to in verse 74. I risked dying for the sake of preserving Your reputation in spite of the agonized cries of my own warriors, who could not understand why I waited so long, and who were afraid to die. I answered them at that time that it was better to die innocent than to go on living as a result of having disobeyed G'd's command. This is why David says "my eyes looked with yearning for Your word". He referred to the "word" announcing his resurrection in time for the final redemption, having made peace with the idea that his present life on earth was about to come to an end.

83. Perhaps You would say that my patience was due to my not having found myself guilty of sin; it is true that I became like a dried out skin hose shrivelled and about to crack in the smoke, – because

פ יְהִי-לִבִּי תָמִים בְּחֻקֶּיךָ לְמַעַן לֹא אֵבוֹשׁ:
פא כָּלְתָה לִתְשׁוּעָתְךָ נַפְשִׁי לִדְבָרְךָ יִחָלְתִּי:
פב כָּלוּ עֵינַי לְאִמְרָתֶךָ לֵאמֹר מָתַי תְּנַחֲמֵנִי:
פג כִּי-הָיִיתִי כְּנֹאד בְּקִיטוֹר חֻקֶּיךָ לֹא שָׁכָחְתִּי:
פד כַּמָּה-יְמֵי-עַבְדֶּךָ מָתַי תַּעֲשֶׂה בְרֹדְפַי מִשְׁפָּט:
פה כָּרוּ-לִי זֵדִים שִׂיחוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא כְתוֹרָתֶךָ:
פו כָּל-מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֱמוּנָה שֶׁקֶר רָדָפוּנִי עָזְרֵנִי:
פז כִּמְעַט כִּלוּנִי בָאָרֶץ וַאֲנִי לֹא-עָזַבְתִּי פִקֻּדֶיךָ:
פח כְּחַסְדְּךָ חַיֵּנִי וְאֶשְׁמְרָה עֵדוּת פִּיךָ:

I was content to leave the meaning of Your statutes to You.

84. Having listed his own efforts on behalf of G'd and His holy name, David asks when G'd in turn will carry out judgments on his pursuers. He has no PERSONAL interest in this since he is already near the end of his life.

"how many days remain to Your servant"? If Doag and Achitofel were to die at the same time as David, – it would be difficult to convince the world that the former's deaths had been due to their having been enemies of David. Better to let them survive and face disgrace. (as will be explained in the following verses).

85. The sinners have dug pits for me by misinterpreting Your Torah. (a reference to David's alleged bastardry as offspring of a Moabite, and his being an adulterer.)

86. Concerning the first accusation, I reply that *Torah shel baal peh*, i.e. the oral tradition is as old as Moses. Since the ancient tradition is that the prohibition for the Moabites to join the Jewish people applies only to Moabite males, my own Jewish ancestry has never been in doubt. They persecuted me with lies, since Bat Sheva had been divorced like all the soldiers divorced their wives before going into battle.

87. David, while Saul had pursued him, had had several opportunities to kill Saul legitimately since he would have merely acted in self defence. He had refrained from doing this since he did not want to violate any of G'd's mandates seeing that Saul had been G'd's anointed. It is most unreasonable therefore to suspect that he could be guilty of as serious a crime as adultery!

88. Shemot Rabbah as well as Talmud Shabbat 30 reports that the portals of the temple would not open when Solomon wanted to

89*The LORD exists forever; Your word stands firm in heaven.*
90*Your faithfulness is for all generations; You have established the earth, and it stands.*
91*They stand this day to [carry out] Your rulings, for all are Your servants.*
92*Were not Your teaching my delight I would have perished in my affliction.*
93*I will never neglect Your precepts, for You have preserved my life through them.*
94*I am Yours; save me! For I have turned to Your precepts.*

bring in the holy ark until they brought the sarcophagus of David and the latter was resurrected. All Solomon's previous prayers had been to no avail. When the people observed Solomon say "do not put to shame Your anointed" (Psalms 132,10), they realized the true stature of David, and David's former enemies were crestfallen with shame. This is why David says here "as a sign of Your kindness, make me alive".

He refers to the event in the future described in the Talmud when he would be vindicated by G'd's own testimony, i.e. *eydut picha*. Here too the meaning of *ve-eshmerah* is I will await developments, similar to the way Jacob used the word in connection with the dream of Joseph that the sun and the moon as well as 11 stars would bow down to him. (Genesis 37,11)

89. This letter, i.e. the verses commencing with the letter *lamed*, tell us something about the greatness of an utterance by G'd. It cannot be compared to the utterance of a human being which is lost the moment it has been uttered. G'd's breath is consuming fire, when it leaves His "mouth", it creates something of enduring value. This is similar to what Rabbi Yochanan said in Chagigah 14 "that every utterance of G'd creates an angel". The sages in Midrash Chazit elaborate further by saying that every one of the 10 commandments "spoke" to each individual Jew asking him "accept me and my Divinity". This shows that every utterance remains part of G'd Himself, else how could the word say "accept my Divinity" instead of "accept His Divinity"? From the above it follows that the utterance is an active agent.

When we stated that the world was created by 10 directives, (Avot 5) the meaning is that each directive is the creative force itself.

פט לְעוֹלָם יְהוָה דְּבָרְךָ נִצָּב בַּשָּׁמָיִם:
צ לְדֹר וָדֹר אֱמוּנָתֶךָ כּוֹנַנְתָּ אֶרֶץ וַתַּעֲמֹד:
צא לְמִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ עָמְדוּ הַיּוֹם כִּי הַכֹּל עֲבָדֶיךָ:
צב לוּלֵי תוֹרָתְךָ שַׁעֲשֻׁעָי אָז אָבַדְתִּי בְעָנְיִי:
צג לְעוֹלָם לֹא-אֶשְׁכַּח פִּקּוּדֶיךָ כִּי-בָם חִיִּיתָנִי:
צד לְךָ-אֲנִי הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי כִּי פִקּוּדֶיךָ דָרָשְׁתִּי:

The words "let there be light" for instance, are creative forces, not just a message from the Creator.

Furthermore, having accomplished its task, the utterance returns to its source – much as Isaiah 55,10–12 states "My word does not RETURN empty without having accomplished My will etc."

The Psalmist describes G'd's word as being similar to G'd Himself – everlasting, i.e. *devarcha le-olam*. It also is capable of maintaining the universe in a supernatural fashion. G'd's very word is testimony that it was He who has initiated the universe and that it all belongs to Him.

He has done so in order that the creatures understand that if left to nature alone, – the universe would not be able to endure, would disintegrate back into chaos.

We explained in our commentary on Bereshit how the "upper" waters are suspended by the words *yehi rakiyah*, let there be an atmosphere between the "waters", that that statement is similar to the one in Psalms 136,6 *larauka ha-aretz al hamayim*, that it is His word which spans the land mass over the waters; without the "word" the earth would be flooded by the waters.

All of this G'd has done in order that we would develop a healthy reverence for Him, serve Him and at the same time make a contribution to preserving the universe in good condition.

90. G'd's faithfulness continues thus throughout the generations. *konanta aretz*, You needed to establish earth firmly,. (else it could not have prevailed against the waters).

91. Why did You do all this by supernatural instead of by natural means? This is for the sake of Your judgments etc. so that all will know that both in the "lower" world and in the "upper" world we are all Your servants. This is also why the Torah talks about *tachtonim* and *elyonim* in Bereshit, to alert us to the fact that G'd has servants in both regions.

95*The wicked hope to destroy me, but I ponder Your decrees.*
96*I have seen that all things have their limit, but Your commandment is broad beyond measure.*
97*O how I love Your teaching!*
It is my study all day long.
98*Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies; they always stand by me.*
99*I have gained more insight than all my teachers, for Your decrees are my study.*
100*I have gained more understanding than my elders, for I observe Your precepts.*

92. The most important of G'd's utterances are His Torah; without it I would have been lost, says David, i.e. dead in my misery. What kept me alive then were Your words – as found in Torah.

93. Hence, I will never forget Your mandates, seeing they are what keep me alive.

94. Since the statement of Rabbi Yochanan that every utterance of G'd creates an angel could give rise to the idea that appeals to the Torah (instead of to G'd directly) might be sinful, inasmuch as Torah is an intermediary just as angels, –David stresses "to You I belong, save me", I have no intermediaries. What he means is that Torah is so much a part of G'd, it cannot be considered like an intermediary. Because I sought out *pikudecha*, Your mandates, I have actually sought out You. This is why the Midrash Chazit quotes the 10 commandments as saying "accept the fact that I am your Divinity".

95. Not only the abstract "words", but also Your tangible commandments such as *tzitzit*, fringes, remind me of Your Torah and You whenever I look at them. They provide me with some understanding, *etbonen*. They act as witnesses, warning me not to sin. This is like the story reported in the Midrash hagadol on Parshat Shelach Lecha (Numbers 15, item 41) about a Jew who travelled a great distance to enjoy the favours of a well know harlot. At the last moment he decided not to lie with her. To her enquiry whether she had disappointed him in some manner, he said no, but that he had been warned by 4 witnesses not to transgress G'd's law. He referred to the 4 *tzitzit* on his *talit*. The harlot, as a result came to Israel and converted.

96. Proof that Your Torah is supernatural is the fact that whereas every other *techilah*, striving has its limits, *rechava mitzvotecha me-od*, Your commandments are very wide, i.e. can be explored in

צה לִי קִוּוּ רְשָׁעִים לְאַבְּדֵנִי עֵדֹתֶיךָ אֶתְבּוֹנָן׃
צו לְכָל-תִּכְלָה רָאִיתִי קֵץ רְחָבָה מִצְוָתְךָ מְאֹד׃
צז מָה-אָהַבְתִּי תוֹרָתֶךָ כָּל-הַיּוֹם הִיא שִׂיחָתִי׃
צח מֵאֹיְבַי תְּחַכְּמֵנִי מִצְוֹתֶךָ כִּי לְעוֹלָם הִיא-לִי׃
צט מִכָּל-מְלַמְּדַי הִשְׂכַּלְתִּי כִּי עֵדְוֹתֶיךָ שִׂיחָה לִי׃
ק מִזְּקֵנִים אֶתְבּוֹנָן כִּי פִקֻּדֶיךָ נָצָרְתִּי׃

their details and ramifications ad infinitum, never reach a point where their meaning has been completely exhausted.

Since man's intellect cannot exhaust the meaning of Your *mitzvot*, they must be spiritual, i.e. supernatural in essence.

97. The emphasis in this group of verses (commencing with the letter *mem*) is on how appropriate it is to love Torah and what is acquired through the keen study of it. It also describes the various levels the student can reach through his teacher.

First David says that in spite of his daily *sichah*, meditation being Torah all day long, – something which according to psychological rules could have reduced the subject matter to becoming common place in his eyes, – his love for Torah has not diminished, *ahavti toratecha*.

98. Because of this I have become wiser than my enemies, though the latter (Doag and Achitofel) preside over the Sanhedrin, Supreme Court. I will not even attribute those teachings I received (2) from Achitofel to them (compare Avot 6,3), but I will attribute them to the fact that it is Your Torah. It will remain mine forever, *le-olam hi li*, NOT THEIRS.

99. Another reason I am not afraid to learn from them is, that I have gained intellectually from all those who have instructed me because Your testimonies have become MY *sichah*. I have never assumed that my teacher was talking to me, but rather than Your testimonies were talking to me through my instructor.

100. Do not fault me for learning Torah from wicked people such as these, seeing G'd has said *lo tassur min hadavar yamin u-semol*, do not depart from the WORD left or right. That statement in the Torah was not addressed to wicked people, but to *tzaddikim*. There is *chochmah* and there is *tevunah*. *Chochmah*, information, facts, one absorbs from one's teacher. *tevunah*, insight is what one acquires by digesting information absorbed and relating it to information one already possessed. What I said I could learn from the likes of Achitofel is only *chochmah*, which he received from his righteous

101*I have avoided every evil way so that I may keep Your word.*
102*I have not departed from Your rules, for You have instructed me.*
103*How pleasing is Your word to my palate, sweeter than honey.*
104*I ponder Your precepts; therefore I hate every false way.*
105*Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light for my path.*

teacher. His *tevunah*, i.e. his applied version of what his teacher taught him, I do not accept. *tevunah* I can learn only from *zekeynim*, elders, people whose personal conduct also serves me as a model, *ki pikudecha natzarti* since I am anxious to fulfil Your mandates.

101. The Midrash on Deut. 30,19 "you shall choose life so that you will live", quotes the following parable. A wanderer faced a fork in the road. One of the roads branching off was wide, well paved, tree lined. The other was narrow, full of holes and offered no shade to the wanderer. When the wanderer was about to proceed along the well paved road, he was accosted by an elderly bystander who told him that the well paved road would soon deteriorate into a difficult path, one that it would be difficult even to get back from, whereas the poor road would improve after a few bends which could not be overlooked at this point.

This is what G'd told Israel in the above verse. He advises us to take the road which looks difficult. By doing so the traveller in effect chooses eternal life, whereas the wanderer who ignores G'd's advice will end up in purgatory.

David explains that his austere way of life was in order to comply with the advice offered in the Torah in the verse quoted which suggests *yissurim*, afflictions in this life in exchange for eternal life in the hereafter. David is reputed to have sat on the ground when teaching Torah to the scholars of his generation in contrast to Irah haya-ari, his predecessor, who sat on a pile of cushions when teaching. (Moed Katan 16)

What David is saying is that even had he NOT been so austere, he would not have strayed from the path of Torah, but the reason that he denied himself the pleasures of life was to observe "YOUR WORD", i.e. what You said in Deut. 30,19.

102. Better even than to acquire *tevunah* through the *zekeynim*, elders, the fact that You Yourself have taught me ensured that I did not depart AT ALL from Your social laws.

קא מִכָּל-אֹרַח רָע כָּלֵאתִי רַגְלָי לְמַעַן אֶשְׁמֹר דְּבָרֶךָ:
קב מִמִּשְׁפָּטֶיךָ לֹא-סָרְתִּי כִּי-אַתָּה הוֹרֵתָנִי:
קג מַה-נִּמְלְצוּ לְחִכִּי אִמְרָתֶךָ מִדְּבָשׁ לְפִי:
קד מִפִּקּוּדֶיךָ אֶתְבּוֹנָן עַל-כֵּן שָׂנֵאתִי כָּל-אֹרַח שָׁקֶר:
קה נֵר-לְרַגְלִי דְּבָרֶךָ וְאוֹר לִנְתִיבָתִי:

103. Our Rabbis in Bereshit Rabbah say that whatever insight into Torah a person gains in this life is merely reconstruction of what his soul had heard at the time the Torah was revealed at Mount Sinai. Through a person's effort, such potential understanding has become actualized. This is what David has in mind when he says *imratecha*, i.e. it was Your word that You spoke at Sinai. Since this was so, as long as it was only my intellect, my potential, I did not notice how sweet it tasted. Now that I have verbalized these insights, I realize how sweet they taste.

104. Had I studied only with the elders, I would have restrained my foot from the pleasures of life, as explained in verse 100. Having gained insight from Torah directly, however, has made my attitude to earthly pleasures one of NATURAL hate. I KNOW that the pleasures of the world are nothing but lies, are deceptive.

105. We have explained that every utterance of G'd creates an angel which endures indefinitely. Since Torah is a string of utterances by G'd, each *mitzvah* is an utterance, creates its own angel which acts as a helper for those who observe the *mitzvot*. Such helpers can be compared to a *ner*, an individual lamp. *ner leraglay devarcha*, Your word acts like a light at my foot, once I have performed a number of commandments, i.e. when I am on my way, *netivoti*, these lamps combine to provide overall illumination, *or*.

Seeing that David was a judge, and that judges are in constant danger of committing fatal errors in judgment, this illumination is needed. The Talmud in Yuma 86 describes that whenever Rav the great Amora had occasion to go to the Court to preside, he used to say concerning judges in general "he goes out willingly to incur death, he ignores the needs of his family, then he returns empty handed to his home". He referred to the responsibility of the judge who may incur death at the hand of Heaven if he convicts and innocent man.

Since the judge does not get paid for his time, he neglects the needs of his family, since he could not earn a living while performing his duties as a judge. David wishes that when he returns from

106*I have firmly sworn to keep Your just rules.*
107*I am very much afflicted; O LORD, preserve me in accordance with Your word.*
108*Accept, O LORD, my freewill offerings; teach me Your rules.*
109*Though my life is always in danger, I do not neglect Your teaching.*
110*Though the wicked have set a trap for me, I have not strayed from Your precepts.*
111*Your decrees are my eternal heritage; they are my heart's delight.*
112*I am resolved to follow Your laws to the utmost forever.*
113*I hate men of divided heart, but I love Your teaching.*

performing his duty as judge he will be as free from guilt as when he set out; this is the path that he wished to be illuminated by the *or* light.

106. He is concerned about whether he had been able to keep the oath that he (and every judge) accepted at Sinai, namely to keep *mishpetey tzidkecha* Your righteous judgments, i.e. to hand down true verdicts.

107. Since I am greatly weakened by my afflictions (says David) my thought processes may have been impaired resulting in my handing down decisions which would make ME liable to death; hence I ask You to keep me alive *kidvarcha*, as Your word, i.e. Torah is supposed to save me from making fatal errors, and thus keep me alive. (*Kidvarcha* DOES NOT refer to a specific promise by G'd to keep David alive).

108. Should You say that due to my afflictions I cannot expect to pronounce sound judgments since such judgments can be weighed and pronounced only by people who are serene, of unperturbed mind, I ask You to accept my promise *nidvot pi*, concerning what I will do in the future once You have saved me. If I know that You will accept my promise as if I had already fulfilled it, I certainly can preside at Court in a serene frame of mind, happy.

109. Should You say that perhaps I have forgotten some of my Torah learning and that I am therefore at fault myself and have no right to ask You to teach me, I can state categorically that even *nafshi be-chapi*, when my life was in such precarious situation that I had my soul in my hand, I never forgot Your Torah. (teaching) I require

קי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי וָאֲקַיֵּמָה לִשְׁמֹר מִשְׁפְּטֵי צִדְקֶךָ׃
קיא נַעֲנֵיתִי עַד־מְאֹד יְהוָה חַיֵּנִי כִדְבָרֶךָ׃
קיב נִדְבוֹת פִּי רְצֵה־נָא יְהוָה וּמִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ לַמְּדֵנִי׃
קיג נַפְשִׁי בְכַפִּי תָמִיד וְתוֹרָתְךָ לֹא שָׁכָחְתִּי׃
קיד נָתְנוּ רְשָׁעִים פַּח לִי וּמִפִּקּוּדֶיךָ לֹא תָעִיתִי׃
קטו נָחַלְתִּי עֵדוֹתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם כִּי־שְׂשׂוֹן לִבִּי הֵמָּה׃
קיז נָטִיתִי לִבִּי לַעֲשׂוֹת חֻקֶּיךָ לְעוֹלָם עֵקֶב׃
קיח סֵעֲפִים שָׂנֵאתִי וְתוֹרָתְךָ אָהָבְתִּי׃

help ONLY regarding matters which my intellect has not comprehended.

110. Should You fault me for not requesting aid in remaining fair and unprejudiced if one of my enemies would appear before me in my capacity as judge, David says that he has proven in his conduct vis a vis Saul and Naval that he did not abuse his power to hurt them. *Mipkudecha lo ta-iti*, I did not err by not treating them according to Your mandates. I have not lacked excuses to deal harshly with them had I wanted to.

111. Your testimonial laws, such as the Sabbath legislation, difficult laws, I have inherited. They are a source of joy to my heart, I did not need to ask help as in the case of civil and criminal law, *mishpatim*.

112. I also do not need help to keep the *chukkim*, since the fact that their observance carries with them a greater reward, *leolam eykev*, is sufficient incentive. I persuaded my heart, which belittled them, declaring them devoid of reason. I pointed out that this is precisely why the reward for performing them is greater.

113. Although I normally hate people who indulge in fence sitting, i.e. spend their time enumerating all the pros and cons of a proposition without proceeding to act, I do love Your Torah, though it is certainly something all aspects of which have to be evaluated. (requires its philosophical approach to be fully understood) Alternatively, David is saying that we must not make human speculation about Torah philosophy our main concern, but accept it as it is and carry it out; otherwise we might wind up like Solomon who thought he could second guess Torah concerning the amassing of wealth and the number of women he could marry, believing himself to be immune to the dangers listed by the Torah if someone did so.

[114]*You are my protection and my shield; I hope for Your word.*
[115]*Keep away from me, you evildoers, that I may observe the commandments of my God.*
[116]*Support me as You promised, so that I may live; do not thwart my expectation.*
[117]*Sustain me that I may be saved, and I will always muse upon Your laws.*
[118]*You reject all who stray from Your laws, for they are false and deceitful.*
[119]*You do away with the wicked as if they were dross; rightly do I love Your decrees.*

114. David refers once again to the incident in the flight against the Philistines described in Samuel II, 5, 23–25, when he resisted all sound logical considerations *se-ifim* of his soldiers and officers, and resolutely made only G'd his shield and refuge, waiting for G'd's signal as he had been told to do.

115. Should You G'd say to me that since I claim to be so totally devoted to You and Your commandments, why have I not abandoned earthly concerns completely? My answer is, says David, if You will remove from me the *mereyim*, the evildoers, so that they will cease persecuting me and interfering with me. Then I will be able to perform the commandments of my G'd with COMPLETE devotion, will concentrate on nothing else. The reason David refers to "G'd", instead of "my G'd" is, that since he had to find refuge outside the borders of the land of Israel he was not able to call G'd "my G'd" at that point. The Talmud Ketuvot 110 has already told us that anyone who resides outside *Eretz Yisrael* is as if he had no G'd of his own.

Or, David refers to the commandments exhorting us to be gracious just like G'd is gracious to people. He would be saying then that he is willing to be good and gracious to everybody, just as he had learned this from G'd, if only G'd would remove his oppressors from him.

116. I do not ask the death of my enemies, only that they cease persecuting me. I would not want the death of my enemies to become the cause for being punished myself, as Abigail had already advised him (Samuel I 25,31) "let this (your revenge) not become the cause of a complaint against you, to claim that your kingdom is based on the shedding of innocent blood". (altered the sequence)

All David is interested in is *va-echyeh*, that I may survive; *samcheni*, support me (so that I do not become the victim). *al*

קיד סְתָרַי וּמָגִנִּי אָתָּה לִדְבָרְךָ יִחָלְתִּי:
קטו סוּרוּ מִמֶּנִּי מְרֵעִים וְאֶצְּרָה מִצְוֹת אֱלֹהָי:
קטז סָמְכֵנִי כְאִמְרָתְךָ וְאֶחְיֶה וְאַל-תְּבִישֵׁנִי מִשִּׂבְרִי:
קיז סְעָדֵנִי וְאִוָּשֵׁעָה וְאֶשְׁעָה בְחֻקֶּיךָ תָמִיד:
קיח סָלִיתָ כָּל-שׁוֹגִים מֵחֻקֶּיךָ כִּי-שֶׁקֶר תַּרְמִיתָם:
קיט סִיגִים הִשְׁבַּתָּ כָל-רִשְׁעֵי-אָרֶץ לָכֵן אָהַבְתִּי עֵדֹתֶיךָ:

tevisheni misivri, my kingdom would be shamed if the death of my enemies would be attributed to me.

117. I have said previously that I constantly guide myself by observing Your laws without making their rationale a factor in my observance of them. This is in contrast to Solomon who used the rationale as justification to ignore some of Your laws. It is quite true that in order to do as I have done Your assistance is required. If You will extend this assistance to me, *se-adeni*, then I will be truly helped. *ve-ivashea*, then I will be able to face Your *chukkim tamid* at all times without worrying about my evil urge.

118. The fact that You have trampled under foot those who were presumptuous enough to attribute their own meaning to Your *chukkim* such as Korach and his group, is proof that it does not pay to do so.

David refers to the fact that Korach challenged the need to affix a *mezuzah* to a house full of holy books, and the need to attach the blue *tzitzit* to a garment woven completely of blue wool. (compare Midrash hagadol Numbers 16,1)

These are merely illustrations of how one's attempt to interpret Your laws arbitrarily, superimposing human reasoning on Your reasoning leads to tragic results. Those people's trickery is nothing but falsehood. They used their arguments to mislead Israel. I have learned from them NOT to deviate from Your *chukkim*.

119. Should someone say that if indeed the death of Korach had been due to this misinterpretation of G'd's law, why did not the Torah spell this out clearly? Why did the Torah merely hint at this by letting us deduce this from the fact that the *tzitzit* legislation is followed by the report about Korach's uprising?

Surely, the Torah could have been specific just as it had been in the case of the sin of the generation of the deluge and concerning the sin of the builders of the tower of Babel!

David's answer is that also in the instances just mentioned the

[120]My flesh creeps from fear of You; I am in awe of Your rulings.
[121]I have done what is just and right; do not abandon me to those who would wrong me.
[122]Guarantee Your servant's well-being; do not let the arrogant wrong me.
[123]My eyes pine away for Your deliverance, for Your promise of victory.

only reason the Torah DID spell out the sin was because the people involved were only dross, *sigim*, there were no righteous people among them, no highly placed ones such as Korach etc.

The reason I love Your *eydut* testimonies is because You REVEAL their deeds so that people will not say that You kill both the wicked and the innocently naive. (*tamim*)

120. Watching what has happened to the *resha-im*, wicked people, my flesh shuddered, i.e. concerning the physical afflictions I might be subjected to, whereas my soul became afraid of *mishpatecha*, Your judgments in the hereafter, the ones of a spiritual nature.

David does NOT want to come by his faith in G'd due to his terror of what he had seen happen to sinners. He loves G'd's commandments as per verse 119, and does not relate to Him from feelings of terror. However, IN ADDITION to love for G'd's commandments, the demise of the sinners also instils the proper reverence for G'd in him as a person as per our verse.

121. The verse commencing with the letter *ayin*, all relate to the subject of being rescued from sinning, i.e. prior to having actually sinned.

When David says nevertheless *al tanicheyni*, do not let me remain in the hands of my oppressors" instead of saying "save me from falling into the hands of my oppressors", this supports the statement of our sages (Rabbi Yochanan in Avodah Zarah 4) that "David was not on morally low enough level to have committed an indiscretion with Bat Sheva; this was allowed to happen only to teach other individual sinners the power of repentance". If the repentance of such a highly placed person as David, who should have served as a model to society was accepted by G'd, then the repentance of any less highly placed individual would certainly be accepted by G'd.

We have explained in Psalm 16 that what is meant here is NOT that G'd engineered it so that David committed a crime, on the contrary G'd helps His pious ones not to stumble into sin. In this

קכ סָמַר מִפַּחְדְּךָ בְשָׂרִי וּמִמִּשְׁפָּטֶיךָ יָרֵאתִי׃
קכא עָשִׂיתִי מִשְׁפָּט וָצֶדֶק בַּל-תַּנִּיחֵנִי לְעֹשְׁקָי׃
קכב עָרֹב עַבְדְּךָ לְטוֹב אַל-יַעַשְׁקֻנִי זֵדִים׃
קכג עֵינַי כָּלוּ לִישׁוּעָתֶךָ וּלְאִמְרַת צִדְקֶךָ׃

instance G'd did not exercise His protective measures and allowed David complete freedom to do what he wanted.

The individuals that Rabbi Yochanan referred to are called David's "oppressors" since it was for their sake that G'd allowed David to get involved with Bat Sheva at the time WITHOUT lifting a finger to prevent such involvement by David.

David implores G'd not to let the same kind of thing happen to him again.

David is concerned that since the world does not know the reason he had been allowed to stumble with Bat Sheva, a repetition of such an apparent sin would mislead people into doubting his sincerity as a true servant of the Lord.

122. I implore that You save me from sinners, i.e. from the forces that endeavour to lead me into sin, whom only YOu can stop by pointing to the righteousness of their potential victims. *arov avdecha letov* please act guarantoor for Your servant to remain good.

There is a category of *oshkim* oppressors i.e. the *kochot chitzonim*, the forces of Satan who lead a person into sin, and against whom only those people are immune concerning whom a special proclamation has been issued in heaven that they must not be assailed..

An example is Satan saying to Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Meir that if heaven had not proclaimed protection for them, he, Satan would have lured them into sin. (Kiddushin 81).

David expresses confidence that since he is Torah observant, G'd will not again allow him to stumble as he had done in the case of Bat Sheva.

123. Although ordinary slaves pine for freedom from their master *eynay kalu*, David says that he is unlike ordinary slaves. He pines for the freedom of the *Shechinah*, *lishuatecha*, YOUR redemption from the unceasing aggression of Amalek, the *yad al kess Kah*, the hand which is still raised against the throne (authority) of G'd, as we have read in Exodus 17,16. David pines for *imrat tzidkecha*, the word of Your righteousness, i.e. he wants to remain G'd's servant. He refers specifically to G'd's promise in Isaiah 37,35 "I protect this city

124Deal with Your servant as befits Your steadfast love; teach me Your laws.
125I am Your servant; give me understanding, that I might know Your decrees.
126It is a time to act for the LORD, for they have violated Your teaching.
127Rightly do I love Your commandments more than gold, even fine gold.
128Truly by all [Your] precepts I walk straight; I hate every false way.

(Jerusalem) to save it (to bring it salvation), for My sake and for the sake of My servant David".

David cannot conceive of a greater "freedom" than to be the servant of G'd in such times. (after the defeat of the army of Sancheriv during the reign of Chiskiyahu.)

124. Having asked G'd to rescue him from seducers, and having expressed his desire to remain G'd's servant, he says that he is aware that it is not the master's way to reveal his conscience. (to say what is on his mind). Rather, the master tells the servant what services he expects of him. He refers to the *chukkim* as G'd's "conscience", His secrets; therefore he asks that G'd should teach him those as an act of *chassadecha*, Your kindness.

125. There is however, another reason – seeing that I AM Your servant – that You should grant me the insight to understand Your *chukkim*.

We know there are occasions when – as an emergency measure –, certain of G'd's laws may be violated. An example is what the prophet Elijah did on Mount Carmel when he repaired an ancient private altar dating back to the time of king Saul in order to dissuade the people from the greater sin of worshipping idols. (Private altars had been outlawed hundreds of years previously). (Compare Kings I, chapter 18.) Having seen that Israel was violating Your Torah as per verse 126, Elijah decided on this temporary measure *eyt la-assot lashem*, as a suitable time to accomplish something on behalf of G'd.

There are other reported instances of emergency legislation that were designed to prevent G'd's laws being desecrated.

The Talmud in Sanhedrin 46 reports that a Jew riding a horse on the Sabbath was executed by stoning at the behest of a Jewish Court. (This was an extreme penalty not called for by the Torah, since the infraction only violated Rabbinic law) It was felt at the time that the only way to preserve the authority of Torah commandments

קכד עֲשֵׂה עִם-עַבְדְּךָ כְחַסְדֶּךָ וְחֻקֶּיךָ לַמְּדֵנִי:
קכה עַבְדְּךָ-אָנִי הֲבִינֵנִי וְאֵדְעָה עֵדֹתֶיךָ:
קכו עֵת לַעֲשׂוֹת לַיהוָה הֵפֵרוּ תוֹרָתֶךָ:
קכז עַל-כֵּן אָהַבְתִּי מִצְוֹתֶיךָ מִזָּהָב וּמִפָּז:
קכח עַל-כֵּן כָּל-פִּקּוּדֵי כֹל יִשָּׁרְתִּי כָּל-אֹרַח שֶׁקֶר שָׂנֵאתִי:

was to make an example of people who defied normative Jewish practice publicly.

On the same folio the Talmud reports that a husband was flagellated for sleeping with his wife in public, – not because this was a violation of Torah law – but because such conduct if condoned would result in a wholesale deterioration of public morals.

In matters of this nature, a great deal of deliberation and discretion is necessary. Sometimes a person may believe that the circumstances do warrant special measures – but he turns out to be wrong. Alternatively, – a person or Court may commit an error by failing to act in such a special way.

We read in Vayikra Rabbah 34,8 that if Reuben had known that the Torah would compliment him on his intention to save Joseph, – he would have brought him back to Jacob. If Aaron had known that the Torah would compliment him on meeting Moses his brother on the way from Midian, – he would have welcomed him with a band, drums etc. (Compare Ruth Rabbah 5,6 for more such instances).

In all of the cases enumerated, – the reason the people involved acted sort of half heartedly was because they were afraid that what they did was NOT approved by G'd.

The Midrash concludes there by saying that whereas in former times a good deed by a person was recorded in the Bible by a prophet, nowadays, Elijah and the Messiah record it and G'd Himself signs and seals the report.

David is asking for the insight to know when and under what circumstances he as a leader must innovate for the sake of preserving G'd's Torah.

126. David spells out here that he needs these insights for specific occasions at specific times, when G'd's Torah is being violated and action has to be taken to safeguard it.

127. BECAUSE I am Your true servant, – I have asked for this insight rather than asking for gold and silver.

128. We have explained on the verse "I belong to my beloved, and

[129]*Your decrees are wondrous; rightly do I observe them.*
[130]*The words You inscribed give light, and grant understanding to the simple.*
[131]*I open my mouth wide, I pant, longing for Your commandments.*
[132]*Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is Your rule with those who love Your name.*
[133]*Make my feet firm through Your promise; do not let iniquity dominate me.*
[134]*Redeem me from being wronged by man, that I may keep Your precepts.*
[135]*Show favor to Your servant, and teach me Your laws.*

my beloved belongs to me" in Song of Songs 6,3, that the part has a natural tendency towards being united with the whole it is a part of. Accordingly, every Jew should display a natural striving to cleave to His Maker. Solomon in Song of Songs remarks on the fact that this is apparently not so, rather *vedodi li*, my beloved, i.e. G'd seems to seek me out rather than that I only seek Him out.

David finds this upsetting wondering if it relates to the fact that sin induced sickness weakens one's soul from acting in its NATURAL way, i.e. seeking out its Maker. He feels that his wholehearted endeavour to comply with the mandates of the *kol*, the whole, i.e. G'd, has enabled him to reverse the process we observe amongst most people.

Not only that, he had abhorred all the paths of worldly pleasures which the evil urge made appear so attractive, as the path of falsehood, *sheker*.

129. Concerning Proverbs 25,2 that "the glory of G'd lies in concealed matter, whereas the glory of human kings lies in what is subject to investigation", Bereshit Rabbah relates this to the story of creation in Genesis, which is beyond our understanding. According to Rabbi Yitzchak, quoted by Rashi on Bereshit 1,1, the Torah commences with Bereshit only in order to support the Jewish people's claim to *Eretz Yisrael*. Inasmuch as G'd is the owner of the earth, He can apportion it to whomsoever He wishes whenever He wishes.

David refers to these wonderful supernatural activities of G'd during the period He created the universe; he says that his soul's cherishing G'd's testimonies is anchored in that fact, i.e. it seeks attachment to its source, the Whole.

130. However, this is an activity which so far is confined to his

קכט פְּלָאוֹת עֵדְוֹתֶיךָ עַל-כֵּן נְצָרָתַם נַפְשִׁי:
קל פֵּתַח-דְּבָרֶיךָ יָאִיר מֵבִין פְּתָיִים:
קלא פִּי פָעַרְתִּי וָאֶשְׁאָפָה כִּי לְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ יָאָבְתִּי:
קלב פְּנֵה-אֵלַי וְחָנֵּנִי כְּמִשְׁפָּט לְאֹהֲבֵי שְׁמֶךָ:
קלג פְּעָמַי הָכֵן בְּאִמְרָתֶךָ וְאַל-תַּשְׁלֶט-בִּי כָּל-אָוֶן:
קלד פְּדֵנִי מֵעֹשֶׁק אָדָם וְאֶשְׁמְרָה פִקּוּדֶיךָ:
קלה פָּנֶיךָ הָאֵר בְּעַבְדֶּךָ וְלַמְּדֵנִי אֶת-חֻקֶּיךָ:

spiritual soul, his physical heart is still ignorant. Even in the opening passages of the Torah, i.e. chapter 1,1 – 2,3, the mysteries are not evenly concealed. The greatest mystery is in the verse prior to "G'd said let there be light", (Genesis 1,3).

From *petach devarecha*, Your opening remarks, some light emerges *ya-ir*, so that those who possess sufficient wisdom to comprehend, can teach the fools i.e. *meyvin petayim*.

131. Even so, when I started speaking about Torah, I confined myself to those part of Torah subsequent to Exodus chapter 11, in which Your *mitzvot* are expounded. Concerning the prior parts of Torah, though I strove hard *eshafah* to understand them, I did not speak to outsiders about them. This is *yo-avti lemitzvotecha*, I longed for Your commandments.

132. Concerning *ma-asseh bereshit*, the story of creation, David asks G'd to grant him understanding such as is granted to those "who love Your name". David does NOT want instruction concerning these matters from a fellow human being.

133. David asks that the power of the angels created by the performance of his *mitzvot* which propel him forward, should be greater than the power of the negative forces created every time he errs and commits a transgression, i.e. *al teshalet bi kol aven*.

134. Since he is the reincarnate of Adam who had committed a far reaching sin by eating from the tree of knowledge, i.e. stealing from G'd, and since such sin was apt to lead to others, – he asks to be released from those consequences, i.e. *oshek adam*, the oppressive negative emanations of Adam's sin. – Once this is accomplished, "I can really observe Your mandates".

135. Up until now, David's requests related to the *asseh tov*, do good aspects of life. Now he addresses himself to the *sur mera*, depart from evil aspects of life. These are connected mostly with the heart and the eyes.

136My eyes shed streams of water because men do not obey Your teaching.
137You are righteous, O LORD; Your rulings are just.
138You have ordained righteous decrees; they are firmly enduring.
139I am consumed with rage over my foes' neglect of Your words.
140Your word is exceedingly pure, and Your servant loves it.
141Though I am belittled and despised, I have not neglected Your precepts.

David says "shine Your face on Your servant". He means that since only G'd can look into the heart of man, he asks G'd to shine His FACE, i.e. to FACE his heart. Such an act by G'd is bound to cure him from his malady and his heart will become so refined that it will become as holy as his spirit, able to absorb the teachings of G'd about His *chukkim*.

136. Also the second "pimp", seducer, his eyes will no longer trouble him then seeing he has wept torrents of tears over the Torah laws he has failed to observe. "I am not worried therefore that my eyes will lead me astray once more", says David.

137. Here David refers to the phenomenon of the righteous who experience many difficulties in life, i.e. *tzaddik ve-ra lo*, and the wicked, who appear to enjoy life in this world.

He acknowledges G'd's righteousness in conducting Himself in a merciful manner vis a vis the wicked. Since the wicked make THIS life their main concern, it is only fair that they should receive the reward for the good they do also in this world. *yashar* means that one does over and beyond what is expected of one on the basis of law. G'd displays this *yashar*, i.e. the *lifnim mishurat hadin* approach in His dealings with the righteous. Since the latter have made the hereafter their main concern, and receive their reward in the hereafter, had G'd dealt with them only on the basis of *din*, justice, they would have received the retribution for any sins they had committed also in the hereafter. But due to G'd's *yashrut*, they receive their retribution already in this life, – to spare them the pain and embarrassment of receiving it in the hereafter. (Punishment to the soul is far more painful than punishment to the body for the same sin).

138. This verse refers to Deuteronomy 7,9–10 in which G'd spelled out that the reward for the *tzaddik* will accrue after 1000

קלו פַּלְגֵי־מַיִם יָרְדוּ עֵינָי עַל לֹא־שָׁמְרוּ תוֹרָתֶךָ׃
קלז צַדִּיק אַתָּה יְהוָה וְיָשָׁר מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ׃
קלח צִוִּיתָ צֶדֶק עֵדְוֹתֶיךָ וֶאֱמוּנָה מְאֹד׃
קלט צִמַּתַתְנִי קִנְאָתִי כִּי־שָׁכְחוּ דְבָרֶיךָ צָרָי׃
קמ צְרוּפָה אִמְרָתְךָ מְאֹד וְעַבְדְּךָ אֲהֵבָהּ׃
קמא צָעִיר אָנֹכִי וְנִבְזֶה פִּקֻּדֶיךָ לֹא שָׁכָחְתִּי׃

generations, i.e. in the hereafter, whereas the wicked will receive his due in this life, *le-ha-avido*, since he will be destroyed and will not have another life. David merely recalls that G'd has already spelled out how He will keep the faith with both the righteous and the wicked.

139. If those who are wicked and well off and who point to my troubles, i.e. *tzaray*, as proof of my unworthiness would do so merely because of a lack of faith in something You have NOT spelled out, this would not upset me, says David. What has aroused my *kinah*, jealousy, is the fact that they do so because *scha-chechu devarecho*, they have allowed themselves to forget, to ignore what You have clearly spelled out. (the reference is to Deut. 7,9–10)

Anything which is NOT spelled out in the Torah is subject to the evil urge's efforts to undermine one's faith, but the people who are my oppressors should have realized that their good fortune was more likely due to the fact that THEY are wicked.

40. Your words are very pure. You have stated in Deut. 6,5, that You want us to "love the Lord Your G'd with all Your *me-od*, i.e. either with all your financial means, or with all your moral and mental resources". One displays love for G'd by gratefully acknowledging ALL that comes one's way in life. Thus it is proper to behave for anyone who regards himself as Your loving servant. Such people will not stumble by following Your paths. The same, of course, is not applicable to the *poshim*, intentional sinners, who will stumble EVEN when treading what they perceive to be *darchey hashem*, the paths of G'd. (Compare Hoseah 14,10) What the prophet means is that the wicked misinterpret their good fortune as a sign of G'd's approval of their conduct.

141. Should someone say that such clear minded reasoning can be expected only of people of ripe old age who are no longer the targets of the evil urge, – I point to the fact that when I had been young, despised by my brothers even, assigned menial tasks to curb

142*Your righteousness is eternal; Your teaching is true.*
143*Though anguish and distress come upon me, Your commandments are my delight.*
144*Your righteous decrees are eternal; give me understanding, that I might live.*
145*I call with all my heart; answer me, O LORD, that I may observe Your laws.*
146*I call upon You; save me, that I may keep Your decrees.*
147*I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope for Your word.*
148*My eyes greet each watch of the night, as I meditate on Your promise.*
149*Hear my voice as befits Your steadfast love; O LORD, preserve me, as is Your rule.*
150*Those who pursue intrigue draw near; they are far from Your teaching.*

my youthful exuberance and individualism, – I still never forgot Your mandates.

Or, since the youngest son is usually spoiled, I was not only not spoiled but was *nivzeh*, despised, and I could have reacted with resentment. Nonetheless, I never forgot Your mandates.

142. Should someone reply that Leviticus 26,4–13, Deuteronomy 11,13–15 as well as Deuteronomy 28,1–13 all clearly spell out benefits to be derived in this life in exchange for observing Torah laws, so why should we observe that some *tzaddikim* do not EVEN enjoy these *peyrot*, dividends of the reward in store for them in the hereafter? To this question, David replies by saying "Your righteousness is righteous forever", i.e. that G'd has changed these "dividends" to become "capital" also in those instances. Had G'd granted these *tzaddikim* the "dividends" in this life, G'd's righteousness could only have been described as something temporary, not *lo-olam*, something permanent.

Nonetheless, *Toratcha emet*, the promises concerning these dividends spelled out in the Torah are true, seeing that only a few select people such as Rabbi Chaninah ben Dotha have had their "dividends" converted into "capital".

143. The proof David had brought from his own conduct while he was despised by his brothers is not so conclusive, since under more severe conditions he might not have remained so steadfast in his

קמב צִדְקָתְךָ צֶדֶק לְעוֹלָם וְתוֹרָתְךָ אֱמֶת:
קמג צַר-וּמָצוֹק מְצָאוּנִי מִצְוֹתֶיךָ שַׁעֲשֻׁעָי:
קמד צֶדֶק עֵדְוֹתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם הֲבִינֵנִי וְאֶחְיֶה:
קמה קָרָאתִי בְכָל-לֵב עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה חֻקֶּיךָ אֶצֹּרָה:
קמו קְרָאתִיךָ הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי וְאֶשְׁמְרָה עֵדֹתֶיךָ:
קמז קִדַּמְתִּי בַנֶּשֶׁף וָאֲשַׁוֵּעָה לִדְבָרְךָ יִחָלְתִּי:
קמח קִדְּמוּ עֵינַי אַשְׁמֻרוֹת לָשִׂיחַ בְּאִמְרָתֶךָ:
קמט קוֹלִי שִׁמְעָה כְחַסְדֶּךָ יְהוָה כְּמִשְׁפָּטֶךָ חַיֵּנִי:
קנ קָרְבוּ רֹדְפֵי זִמָּה מִתּוֹרָתְךָ רָחָקוּ:

Torah observance. He therefore points out that though he has had to face i.e. *metza-uni* the two greatest challenges to loyalty to G'd namely ***tzar***, the ***yetzer hara***, evil urge and *matzok* extreme poverty, he has still remained steadfast and has made G'd's commandments his delight. Had I become angry at my fate, says David, I certainly could not have described Your *mitzvot* as my delight, *sha-ashu-i*.

144. Although I have been steadfast in the past, in order for me to continue like this forever, please make me understand Your testimonies so that I shall live.

145. Another argument justifying the request to have the *chukkim* explained to me, is the fact that I call on G'd with my WHOLE heart, i.e. with both my urges, the ***yetzer hatov*** as well as the ***yetzer hara***. This places me in a position superior to the angels who do not need to battle a ***yetzer hara***. Therefore I wish for a direct answer from You, not through an intermediary such as an angel. Hence *aneyni*, please answer ME!

146. Another reason justifying a direct communication from You is the fact that I do not request any of this for personal reasons; it is not an ego trip, but merely to help me observe Your testimonies.

147. If I rose early at night, it was because I hope for a communication from You.

148. If my eyes forestalled the night watches, it was to meditate on Your pronouncements, i.e. the holy spirit that inspired my hymns.

149. Therefore, please listen PERSONALLY to my voice; I appreciate that this is an act of great kindness by You, that I do not have the RIGHT to ask for *peh el peh* mouth to mouth communication from You. Keep me alive!, as an act of mercy, i.e. *Hashem* even *kemishpatecha* when You apply Your judgments.

151*You, O LORD, are near, and all Your commandments are true.*
152*I know from Your decrees of old that You have established them forever.*
153*See my affliction and rescue me, for I have not neglected Your teaching.*
154*Champion my cause and redeem me; preserve me according to Your promise.*
155*Deliverance is far from the wicked, for they have not turned to Your laws.*
156*Your mercies are great, O LORD; as is Your rule, preserve me.*

150. In the event G'd would reject David's plea for direct communication, saying that man is superior to the angels only if he did NOT sin, whereas David had sinned, David offers two arguments. 1) Technically, I did not sin, since Bat Sheva had been divorced at the time I first laid eyes on her. 2) Even those who have indulged in adultery – *karvu*, if they come close again, repent, they can come close to You again, even though *mitoratcha rachaku* they have been far away from Your Torah.

In fact, their repentance may make G'd even closer to them than BEFORE their sin, since we have the principle *bemakom she-baaley teshuvah omdim, eyn tzaddikim gemurim yecholim la-amod*, that the moral platform occupied by the repentant sinner is higher even than that occupied by the total *tzaddik*. (Berachot 34, Sanhedrin 99).

Not only that, but if repentance was motivated by love for G'd, previous sins are actually rated as merits. All of this proves how great is the person who gains mastery over his urges. Even a person who has committed adultery, something equivalent to having violated all Your laws, having been a *kopher be-ikkar*, a total heretic, can return fully.

151. Since the repentant sinners have come close to You, You in turn are close to them. All Your *mitzvot* are seen as *emet*, truth, even the negative commandments whose violation created negative forces in the world, i.e. *sheker* lies, have now been converted into *emet*, truth, i.e. have become positive forces due to the repentance of the sinner.

This ought to apply to me in increased measure says David, since I have not actually transgressed the commandment.

I can claim therefore to be superior to the angels, and expect direct communication from You.

קנא קָרוֹב אַתָּה יְהוָה וְכָל-מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֱמֶת:
קנב קֶדֶם יָדַעְתִּי מֵעֵדֹתֶיךָ כִּי לְעוֹלָם יְסַדְתָּם:
קנג רְאֵה-עָנְיִי וְחַלְּצֵנִי כִּי-תוֹרָתְךָ לֹא שָׁכָחְתִּי:
קנד רִיבָה רִיבִי וּגְאָלֵנִי לְאִמְרָתְךָ חַיֵּנִי:
קנה רָחוֹק מֵרְשָׁעִים יְשׁוּעָה כִּי-חֻקֶּיךָ לֹא דָרָשׁוּ:
קנו רַחֲמֶיךָ רַבִּים יְהוָה כְּמִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ חַיֵּנִי:

152. Our sages in Pessachim 54, based on Proverbs 8,22 "G'd acquired me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old", state that 7 things were created before the universe. One of these 7 items was *teshuvah* repentance, see Psalms 90,2–3 "before the mountains were brought forth....You said "repent!", o sons of man". The repentant sinners therefore can be considered also as one of the *yessodot*, foundations of the universe. Therefore the Psalmist says here *ki leolam yesadetom*, "You have used them to found the universe with".

153. It appears that the 8 verses commencing with the letter *resh*, refer to the period that David was being persecuted by Saul and his men. David appeals to G'd for salvation protesting his loyalty to G'd. He does not ask that Saul and his men be punished, – not wanting to become the cause of their deaths–; he only asks to be rescued. BECAUSE I did not forget Your Torah, I realize that if I were to be the cause of their death, this would be held against me.

154. If I fail to prove myself innocent in litigation, – be You my advocate!, plead my cause to bring them to justice, since I am the vessel of Your words, i.e. I am possessed of *ruach hakodesh* holy spirit. Keep me alive so that I can continue to function as the one who communicates Your word.

155. Since the word *teshuah* salvation is feminine, we would have expected the adjective "far" to have been in the feminine also, i.e. *rechokah*, instead of *rachok*. What David is saying does NOT refer to *teshuah* then but to his own position vis a vis his wicked enemies. He asks G'd merely to save him by placing him *rachok*, far, from them, or vice versa. He wants G'd to dissuade Saul from pursuing him.

156. Referring back to his request in verse 154 that G'd act as his advocate, David hastens to say that he wants G'd to act in His capacity as *Hashem*, i.e. the merciful one, not in His capacity as *elokim*, practicing strict rule of law. G'd's attribute of mercy also contains within it elements of *din* justice i.e. *rachamecha rabim*

157*Many are my persecutors and foes; I have not swerved from Your decrees.*
158*I have seen traitors and loathed them, because they did not keep Your word in mind.*
159*See that I have loved Your precepts; O LORD, preserve me, as befits Your steadfast love.*
160*Trust is the essence of Your word; Your just rules are eternal.*
161*Princes have persecuted me without reason; my heart thrills at Your word.*
162*I rejoice over Your promise as one who obtains great spoil.*

hashem it is MOSTLY (but not entirely) *hashem*, mercy. Hence, when G'd judges *ke-mishpatecha*, David wants Him to do this in His capacity as *Hashem*.

157. Though his pursuers are many, David insists that his troubles are NOT due to neglect of Torah laws, i.e. "I have not deviated from Your testimonies". My fear of my pursuers is based only on the fact that since they are free agents, You will not interfere with their plans.

158. However, I do have an argument in my favour. We have a rule (Baba Kama 92) that if someone prays for his fellow man requesting something that he himself lacks, has not been blessed with, G'd responds by granting the petitioner that which he lacks first of all. (Compare Sarah becoming pregnant right after Abraham had prayed for the Philistine women to be able to give birth. Genesis 20,17–21,1.)

I have seen people who betrayed You, says David and have quarrelled with them on account of that, – not bothering to remonstrate with them for the wrong they are doing me. My prayer therefore should be heard ahead of their prayers, if any.

159. Do me this kindness and keep me alive, since I have demonstrated concern that OTHERS should observe Your pronouncements. The principle mentioned is spelled out clearly in Job 42,10 "G'd restored to Job all that had been his, – since he had prayed on behalf of his friend."

160. David had been able to ask concerning himself that he should be judged only by the attribute of G'd's mercy. He could not ask this concerning the kings who would be descended from him. G'd had stated clearly that whereas as a gift to David, his son would sit on his throne, and that this was an unconditional promise by G'd, i.e. *rosh devarcha emet*, the basic promise would have to become true *emet*, but the subsequent fortunes of the davidic dynasty would

קנז רַבִּים רֹדְפַי וְצָרָי מֵעֵדְוֹתֶיךָ לֹא נָטִיתִי׃
קנח רָאִיתִי בֹגְדִים וָאֶתְקוֹטָטָה אֲשֶׁר אִמְרָתְךָ לֹא שָׁמָרוּ׃
קנט רְאֵה כִּי־פִקּוּדֶיךָ אָהָבְתִּי יְהוָה כְּחַסְדְּךָ חַיֵּנִי׃
קס רֹאשׁ־דְּבָרְךָ אֱמֶת וּלְעוֹלָם כָּל־מִשְׁפַּט צִדְקֶךָ׃
קסא שָׂרִים רְדָפוּנִי חִנָּם וּמִדְּבָרֶיךָ פָּחַד לִבִּי׃
קסב שָׂשׂ אָנֹכִי עַל־אִמְרָתֶךָ כְּמוֹצֵא שָׁלָל רָב׃

depend on the individual conduct of each king. (compare Psalms 132,11–12.)

If his descendants would stray, they would be subject to judgment by the *midat hadin*, attribute of justice. However, there are nuances in the application of *midat hadin*. David is asking that whenever judgment of his descendants is called for, it should be tempered with *tzedakah*, charity.

161. The verses beginning with the letter *shin*, refer to aspects of *yirat chet*, fear of sin, whether to its relevance in this life or in the life hereafter, i.e. the accounting one has to give in the hereafter for the way one has conducted oneself in this life.

First David states that the fear of his pursuers in this life cannot be compared to the fear of punishment for one's sins. When one is not guilty, – one does not really fear human pursuers, i.e. *sarim redafuni chinam*, the princes pursued me without cause when I was a young man, but "from your word I was afraid". When the prophet Nathan accused me of having sinned against G'd, I was really afraid. (Samuel II 12,1–14.)

162. But when he told me that my sin had been forgiven, I rejoiced like a person who has found a great treasure, but who now assumed the worries about keeping his treasure. (compare Avot 2,8 "many possessions cause increased amount of worry")

Although David had been assured that he was not liable to a human tribunal, – seeing that Bat Sheva had been divorced, – he was afraid of having to face a heavenly tribunal on account of what he had done.

163. Therefore I began to become especially careful concerning the first things man has to give an accounting of in the hereafter, namely "did you deal fairly with your fellow man, did you await the coming of the Messiah anxiously, and did you make Torah your principal pursuit?"

Concerning the first query "did you deal fairly etc.", David says that

[163]I hate and abhor falsehood; I love Your teaching.
[164]I praise You seven times each day for Your just rules.
[165]Those who love Your teaching enjoy well-being; they encounter no adversity.
[166]I hope for Your deliverance, O LORD; I observe Your commandments.
[167]I obey Your decrees and love them greatly.
[168]I obey Your precepts and decrees; all my ways are before You.
[169]May my plea reach You, O LORD; grant me understanding according to Your word.
[170]May my petition come before You; save me in accordance with Your promise.
[171]My lips shall pour forth praise, for You teach me Your laws.

he not only hated dishonesty as in the past, but he actively abhorred it, *ta-avti.*

Concerning the preoccupation with Torah, not only did I make it my principal concern, but *ahavti*, I did so with love.

164. I also praised Your judgments 7 times daily, acknowledging afflictions that You imposed on me, to prove that I was happy to be so afflicted. (in THIS life)

165. Should someone challenge my by saying "if you concerned yourself with Torah so much, how is it that the principle of "he who preoccupies himself with Torah has his afflictions removed" (Berachot 8) was not fulfilled in your case? To this implied accusation his reply is that the statement quoted applies to those who have not stumbled in sin, i.e. *ve-eyn lamo michshol.* Since I have been subject to stumbling into sin however, says David, the effects had to be wiped out through my suffering afflictions.

166. Just as I have been careful to deal faithfully with my fellow man, so I have waited anxiously for Your redemption, *sibarti li-yeshuatcha.* Even though the *Shechinah* Divine Presence, was not actually in exile during David's lifetime, seeing that the temple (tabernacle) was standing, the ongoing challenge of Amalek against G'd and what He stands for was ever present. G'd's throne therefore was not yet complete, and David says that he awaited the developments anxiously which would make G'd's throne complete. Naturally, I continued to observe Your other commandments as I had done before.

167. Since I had always loved Your testimonies, – not like some

קסג שֶׁקֶר שָׂנֵאתִי וָאֲתַעֵבָה תּוֹרָתְךָ אָהָבְתִּי:
קסד שֶׁבַע בַּיּוֹם הִלַּלְתִּיךָ עַל מִשְׁפְּטֵי צִדְקֶךָ:
קסה שָׁלוֹם רָב לְאֹהֲבֵי תוֹרָתֶךָ וְאֵין לָמוֹ מִכְשׁוֹל:
קסו שִׂבַּרְתִּי לִישׁוּעָתְךָ יְהוָה וּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ עָשִׂיתִי:
קסז שָׁמְרָה נַפְשִׁי עֵדֹתֶיךָ וָאֹהֲבֵם מְאֹד:
קסח שָׁמַרְתִּי פִקּוּדֶיךָ וְעֵדֹתֶיךָ כִּי כָל-דְּרָכַי נֶגְדֶּךָ:
קסט תִּקְרַב רִנָּתִי לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה כִּדְבָרְךָ הֲבִינֵנִי:
קע תָּבוֹא תְחִנָּתִי לְפָנֶיךָ כְּאִמְרָתְךָ הַצִּילֵנִי:
קעא תַּבַּעְנָה שְׂפָתַי תְּהִלָּה כִּי תְלַמְּדֵנִי חֻקֶּיךָ:

people whose SOUL loves *mitzvot*, but whose body demurs when it comes to performing them, MY soul and body have always worked in harmony in this respect.

168. Even if in some respects my soul's love for Your commandments may have preceded that of my body, *kol drachay negdecha*, I have reached the stage where all my paths, i.e. body and soul are before You, are always facing You.

169. Having implored G'd concerning the accounting he will have to render at the time he dies, David now requests the additional insights which will be granted people at the time they are about to die. Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai explained the verse "when they are about to die *tossef rucham*, (Psalms 104,29) to mean, that at that time a person will be reminded of all the Torah he has ever studied, because "G'd will not starve the soul of the righteous. David asks to be granted this advantage. He hopes that his body will be pure so that he can ask for life for his body in line with the statement *David melech Yisrael chay vekayam* (Rosh Hashanah 25)

He asks that at the time of his death, his "Torah" i.e. *rinah* will be accepted.

The Talmud Tamid 32 states, based on (Lamentations 2,19) that he who gets up to study Torah at night will find the *Shechinah* present. David expresses confidence that at the time he will die all his Torah learning will be with him *lefanecha*, in Your Presence. He hopes that anything he had not comprehended during his lifetime will be explained to him while he is still alive, i.e. *havineyni*.

170. Once I have achieved all this while still physically alive, I hope to attain the level of what my soul (minus my body) achieved when it was present at the revelation at Mount Sinai. May my prayer come

172*My tongue shall declare Your promise, for all Your commandments are just.*
173*Lend Your hand to help me, for I have chosen Your precepts.*
174*I have longed for Your deliverance, O LORD; Your teaching is my delight.*
175*Let me live, that I may praise You; may Your rules be my help;*
176*I have strayed like a lost sheep; search for Your servant, for I have not neglected Your commandments.*

120

A song of ascents.
In my distress I called to the LORD and He answered me.

before You as You have said when Israel was free from the yoke of the angel of death, (*cheyrut al haluchot*). May You save me from the clutches of the angel of death at that time also.

We have explained on the verse *ve-attem tihyu li goy kadosh*, (Exodus 19,6) that even the BODY will be completely holy, like that of Elijah over whom the angel of death had no authority. *ke-imratcha*, is a reference to the verse in Exodus we have quoted.

171. At that time even my physical lips will express Your praise, – when You have taught me the meaning of Your *chukkim*.

172. My tongue will respond at that time in extolling ALL Your words, since Your *mitzvot* are all righteousness, justice.

173. All this shows that the sanctity achieved at the time of impending death refines also the body, something causing me joy, especially the insights granted at that time.

David is confident G'd's "hand" will assist him, seeing that he can face the first 3 queries that would be put to him at the heavenly tribunal. They are 1) did you deal faithfully and honestly with your fellow man? 2) did you look forward to redemption 3) did you make Torah your major preoccupation?

He answers the first query in this verse, saying "I have chosen Your mandates", meaning that he tried to model himself according to the revealed attributes of G'd. As G'd is gracious, so he has tried to be gracious etc. It follows that he could not have violated the *beyn adam lechavero*, between man and man set of commandments in the Torah.

174. Concerning query #2, – if he had looked forward to

קעב תַּעַן לְשׁוֹנִי אִמְרָתֶךָ כִּי כָל-מִצְוֹתֶיךָ צֶדֶק:
קעג תְּהִי-יָדְךָ לְעָזְרֵנִי כִּי פִקּוּדֶיךָ בָחָרְתִּי:
קעד תָּאַבְתִּי לִישׁוּעָתְךָ יְהוָה וְתוֹרָתְךָ שַׁעֲשֻׁעָי:
קעה תְּחִי-נַפְשִׁי וּתְהַלְלֶךָּ וּמִשְׁפָּטְךָ יַעְזְרֵנִי:
קעו תָּעִיתִי כְשֶׂה אֹבֵד בַּקֵּשׁ עַבְדֶּךָ כִּי מִצְוֹתֶיךָ לֹא שָׁכָחְתִּי:

קכ

א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶל-יְהוָה בַּצָּרָתָה לִי קָרָאתִי וַיַּעֲנֵנִי:

redemption, he says that he certainly did so. Concerning query #3, David affirms that Torah has been his delight.

175. In view of this, he asks "is it possible that ONLY my soul will live and praise You?" Surely the *yissurim*, afflictions i.e. *mishpatecha* I suffered were not only meant to purify my soul, whereas my body would rot in the grave??

176. David anticipates G'd as saying to him that the afflictions were a *midah keneged midah* type of punishment for the fact that he had permitted himself physical pleasure with Bat Sheva. As a result his body needs to die as opposed to his soul, and he will be resurrected ultimately like all the other people who qualify for resurrection.

David counters this by saying *ta-iti kaseh oved*. We have explained previously (119,121) the statement of Rabbi Yochanan that David at the time of the incident with Bat Sheva had not been on a morally low enough level to have committed that sin.

The only thing that had happened at the time was, that G'd had momentarily withdrawn the special protective shield He employs to safeguard the righteous against sinning. This had been in order to demonstrate to other less prominent sinners that the act of David's contrition had been enough for G'd to forgive him, and that they themselves should also repent their sins so that G'd could forgive them.

David emphasizes that just as sheep normally are under the care of a guardian, a shepherd, and a dog, so Torah observant people like himself also feel themselves being guarded by G'd against stumbling into sin. He had stumbled with Bat Sheva ONLY because his guardian was absent at the time. He had been temporarily like lost sheep, *seh oved*, his error had not been due to the fact that he had allowed his knowledge of G'd's Torah to lapse in any way, *shachachti toratecha*.

2O LORD, save me from treacherous lips, from a deceitful tongue!
3What can you profit, what can you gain, O deceitful tongue?
4A warrior's sharp arrows, with hot coals of broom-wood.
5Woe is me, that I live with Meshech, that I dwell among the clans of Kedar.
6Too long have I dwelt with those who hate peace.
7I am all peace; but when I speak, they are for war.

Psalm 120

1. *Lashon hara*, i.e. evil gossip causes the death of 3 categories of people. It kills the one who spreads it, the one who lends a willing ear, and its victim.

However, the troubles suffered by these 3 categories of people are not of equal severity. Those who spread evil gossip and listen to it destroy a third person, whereas the victim only suffers on his own person.

Saul and Doag who bore the guilt of the murder of the city of priests Nov, (Samuel I 22,1–18) suffered more than the priests who were killed in that city. Similarly, David and Tzivah bore a greater guilt and therefore suffered more than Mefiboshet the victim of their accusations. (Samuel II 16,1–4).

David has learned that when he had been the victim of slander when Saul had pursued him, that he had been rescued by G'd with relative ease. All he had had to do was to call on G'd, and G'd responded, i.e. *karati-vaya-aneyni* I called and He answered me, before he had even articulated his plea.

This was because he himself had NOT been guilty of the sin of slandering anyone at that time, neither actively nor passively. (by listening to slander)

2. Here David asks for G'd's help not to listen, i.e. not to accept at face value the evil gossip told him. He is afraid to defile himself since the distress resulting from that does not only befall the victim but also the person who listens so the accusation and accepts it without investigation. Although we have a saying that "lies have no legs", (Yalkut Torah 247,3) this is not so when lies are dressed up attractively. Then they find ready listeners.

3. The Holy spirit replies that it is useless to pray for help in this matter, since it is up to man to be righteous or wicked. It is not something within G'd's province to control. The fact that *lashon hara* is attractively packaged i.e. is deceptive, is no excuse to accept it at face value.

ג יְהוָה הַצִּילָה נַפְשִׁי מִשְּׂפַת-שֶׁקֶר מִלָּשׁוֹן רְמִיָּה׃
ד מַה-יִּתֵּן לְךָ וּמַה-יֹּסִיף לָךְ לָשׁוֹן רְמִיָּה׃
ה חִצֵּי גִבּוֹר שְׁנוּנִים עִם גַּחֲלֵי רְתָמִים׃
ו אוֹיָה-לִּי כִּי-גַרְתִּי מֶשֶׁךְ שָׁכַנְתִּי עִם-אָהֳלֵי קֵדָר׃
ז רַבַּת שָׁכְנָה-לָּהּ נַפְשִׁי עִם שׂוֹנֵא שָׁלוֹם׃
ח אֲנִי-שָׁלוֹם וְכִי אֲדַבֵּר הֵמָּה לַמִּלְחָמָה׃

4. David replies to the holy spirit saying that the arrows of the mighty are sharp like glimmering coals. Evil gossip is unlike other sins in that *brit karuta she-yitkabel*, i.e. it will be accepted indiscriminately. David wishes that the same rules should apply to *lashon hara* that apply to other sins, i.e. the sins which a person senses and is able to distance himself from them. Evil gossip approaches suddenly and swamps the listener.

The reason David compares *lashon hara* to *chitzey gibor*, the hero's arrows, is, that when one shoots an arrow 3 conditions determine the danger the potential victim finds himself in. 1)If the bow is stretched sufficiently the marksman will hit the target. 2)However, if a non vital part is hit, this may enable the victim to survive. 3)If the tip of the arrow is poisoned, the victim will die even if hit in non vital areas of his body. David says that all 3 characteristics are present in *lashon hara*, evil gossip.

1)The person telling the gossip takes deadly aim, i.e. does not tell merely triviae concerning his potential victim. 2)He polishes the nature of his deceitful remarks in such a fashion that they will easily find a willing listener. If you think that just as in the case of other sins, the talebearer will repent his sin, this is not so. The words that have been uttered cannot be recalled, on the contrary they burn themselves ever more deeply into the consciousness of the listener until they achieve their lethal aim, i.e. *im gachaley retamim* like coals that keep on glimmering.

5. David knows about all this from personal experience when he had been a stranger, a refugee for a long time in *aholey kaydor*, with the nomads of Kaydor, due to Saul having accepted slanderous remarks concerning him.

6. He had not only suffered physically but also spiritually, i.e. *rabbat shochna lah nafshi*, from the people who hated peace.

7. Whether I offered peace, spoke softly, i.e. *ani shalom*, or whether I spoke toughly, *ve-chi adaber*, *hemah lamilchamah*, they

121 *A song for ascents.*
I turn my eyes to the mountains; from where will my help come?
2My help comes from the LORD, maker of heaven and earth.
3He will not let your foot give way; your guardian will not slumber;
4See, the guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps!
5The LORD is your guardian, the LORD is your protection at your right hand.

were bent on war. Then my soul rejoiced, since at least they did not deceive, speak one thing with the mouth while feeling quite differently. David refers to Tzivah, who wile professing to be concerned with David's welfare – speaking peace with a forked tongue – had only self interest in mind (Samuel II chapter 16) *lama-alot*.

Psalm 121

1. The unusual construction of *la-ma-alot* instead of the customary *ha-ma-alot*, deserves our attention. The fact is that this hymn was composed for the sake of the *ma-alot*, the steps, i.e. the spiritual levels which G'd raises man to in accordance with the way man has prepared himself for such elevation.

Most commentators understand this psalm as speaking about the Jews in exile. Possibly, it refers to every single individual who feels the pain of exile and turns to G'd saying that no one else can bring salvation except G'd. He therefore endeavors to return to G'd wholeheartedly. This Jew therefore says "I will raise my eyes towards the "mountains" i.e. the patriarchs, asking whence his help will come seeing that the merits of the patriarchs that the Jewish people had been drawing on for so long have been exhausted. (else why would the temple have been destroyed?)

2. Therefore, he says, I have no one else to rely on except G'd Himself, the maker of heaven and earth. If the Psalmist uses the word *osseh* makes, in the present tense, describing G'd as MAKING heaven and earth rather than as having made it, he may express the same thought as does Isaiah 45,7, who said "just like the new heaven and the new earth which I am making etc." Isaiah does not say of G'd "which I HAVE MADE", but "which I am making". This teaches that G'd creates new "heavens" and "earths" daily.

Clearly, the prophet describes spiritual creations. The Kabbalists have taught us that learning and involvement with Torah creates

קכא א שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶשָּׂא עֵינַי אֶל-הֶהָרִים מֵאַיִן יָבוֹא
עֶזְרִי:
ב עֶזְרִי מֵעִם יְהוָה עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:
ג אַל-יִתֵּן לַמּוֹט רַגְלֶךָ אַל-יָנוּם שֹׁמְרֶךָ:
ד הִנֵּה לֹא-יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל:
ה יְהוָה שֹׁמְרֶךָ יְהוָה צִלְּךָ עַל-יַד יְמִינֶךָ:

spiritual lights which the righteous will enjoy in the hereafter. It is these that G'd has assured Israel of when He said "just like the new heaven... stand before Me, – so your descendants and your name will stand before Me". (Isaiah 66,22)

Hence the Psalmist is certain that the help for the individual exiled Jew will come directly from the G'd who continues to renew heaven and earth. He would not need to do any of this except for those who perform His will. He cannot abandon me, says David, else all these activities of G'd would be wasted. Thus he is certain that our descendants and our name will endure.

3. The holy spirit replies to exiled Israel that its very appreciation that none other will save it coupled with the fact that Israel wants to purify itself, i.e. repent, is guarantee that G'd will indeed assist, not allow its foot to stumble, keep constant watch over it, i.e. *lo yanum shomrecha*. This will help prevent Israel from sinning as is written (Samuel I 2,9) "He safeguards the feet of His pious", to ensure no *takalah*, no mishap is caused through them. This is why the word *lamut* has the vowel *patach* under the *lamed* and not the usual half vowel *sheva*. The reference is to the KNOWN barrier, i.e. *mot*, the *yetzer hara*, evil urge. Isaiah (Isaiah 57,14) already referred to the evil urge as *michshol*, stumbling block.

Since on occasion man sins suddenly, without prior seduction by his evil urge, G'd promises to safeguard the *baal teshuvah* repentant sinner also against such sudden sins, i.e. *al yanum shomrecha*, Your guardian never slumbers.

4/5. Should you think that it is NATURAL for G'd to be so protective of *haba letaher* of Jews who endeavour to do the right thing, to purify where there has previously reigned impurity, – the additional promise in this instance is that this *hashgacha peratit*, personal sympathetic guidance by G'd, is extended to each individual repentant Jew, not just to the Jewish community. The reference in verse 5 is parallel to the promise in Psalm 91,7 "1000 will fall by your left side, 10,000 by your right side".

6By day the sun will not strike you, nor the moon by night.
7The LORD will guard you from all harm; He will guard your life.
8The LORD will guard your going and coming now and forever.

122 *A song of ascents. Of David.*
I rejoiced when they said to me, "We are going to the House of the LORD."

We need to understand why the ***kochot chitzoniot***, the forces of evil, attack man's right side with 10 times the number (strength) than the same forces apply when they attack man's left side. Our sages realized that the forces of evil try to attach themselves to man's holy side, seeking to undermine that part of him. Rabbi Simon (Shabbat 88) states that when the Jewish people at Mount Sinai said "we will do and we will listen" (Exodus 24,7) 600,000 angels came and placed 2 crowns on each Jew's head. However, when the people participated in the sin of the golden calf, 1,200,000 came and deprived them of these crowns. Tosaphot ask why twice the number of angels were required to remove the crowns? The reason is that twice the effort is required to remove sanctity from someone who has once acquired it than is required to acquire it in the first instance. This explains why the ***kochot chitzoniot*** invest more effort in attacking the holy side of the Jew than they invest in undermining his mundane parts.

The promise that the holy spirit holds out in our case is that ***hashem tzilcha***, the Lord is your protective shade, i.e. He protects your right side to such an extent that there is no need for the attackers to fall, they will not even be allowed to come close to the ***tzaddik***, righteous individual. Certainly they will not attack you on the left side either, seeing that they usually mount only diversionary attacks on that side of yours.

6. Another benefit that will accrue to the repentant Jew is that in spite of the principle that "all is within the province of heaven except the common cold" (Ketuvot 30), i.e. that if man does not use his common sense to protect himself against known risks, he cannot expect that G'd should do so for him, this instance is different. G'd will see to it that the sun does not disable the *tzaddik* by day, nor the moon by night. (i.e. the chill of the night)

7. It is a well known fact that man's troubles do not originate from

ו יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא-יַכֶּכָּה וְיָרֵחַ בַּלָּיְלָה:
ז יְהוָה יִשְׁמָרְךָ מִכָּל-רָע יִשְׁמֹר אֶת-נַפְשֶׁךָ:
ח יְהוָה יִשְׁמָר-צֵאתְךָ וּבוֹאֶךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם:

קכב א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד שָׂמַחְתִּי בְּאֹמְרִים לִי בֵּית יְהוָה נֵלֵךְ:

the APPARENT cause, i.e. the object causing his discomfort or pain, but that these are only agents, whereas the real causes are man's sins. As our sages put it "not the snake (poison) kills, but the sin kills". (Rosh Hashanah 29 similar) It is sin which gives power to "lethal" agents to cause damage. Not only this, but each sin triggers other sins.

The Psalmist describes that it is within man's power not only to utilize his talents, but if one endeavors to resist sin generally, then G'd will even prevent the negative forces one creates through occasional 'apses, NOT to trigger further lapses.

This is the meaning of *yishmarcha mikol ra*, He will guard you against all evil, even from the EFFECTS of the *ra* one has created oneself. Even beyond that, the realization to have created *ra*, evil, may cause the inadvertent sinner to preserve *yishmor* his soul by providing the impetus to do *teshuvah me-ahavah*, repentance motivated by love of G'd, which results in converting former demerits into merits. (Resh Lakish Yuma 86)

8. Another advantage is that when one departs this life *tzaytcha*, G'd will *yishmar bo-echa*, protect your re-incarnation so that you need not fear that in a future life you will stumble into sin. When the Talmud describes the death of Rabbi Yochanan and Rava respectively, both had expressed the wish NOT to have to suffer. (compare Berachot 5) Despite their being made to suffer very little, however, they did not want to be revived, i.e. re-incarnated, so as not to have to undergo the pain of dying once more in a future life.

Psalm 122

1. We know that the temple in our world corresponds to the sanctuary in the "higher" world. (Talmud Yerushalmi Berachot 4) Anyone entering down here to offer a sacrifice, is as if he were offering such sacrifice in the celestial temple.

Solomon already stated (Kings I 8,13) "I have built a *bet zevul* (allusion to a celestial region). All the abundance of the celestial

[2]Our feet stood inside your gates, O Jerusalem,
[3]Jerusalem built up, a city knit together,
[4]to which tribes would make pilgrimage, the tribes of the LORD, —as was enjoined upon Israel— to praise the name of the LORD.
[5]There the thrones of judgment stood, thrones of the house of David.
[6]Pray for the well-being of Jerusalem; "May those who love you be at peace.

regions are made available "down here", else the concept of G'd "dwelling" on earth is incomprehensible. The same concept applies to the city of Jerusalem which also has its counterpart in the"higher" regions. David exclaims joyfully that the sanctuary that will be built by his son Solomon will be known as the house of G'd, *Bet Hashem*. Anyone who goes to Solomon's temple, will in fact be going to "G'd's house", as if he were proceeding to the celestial temple.

2. Although the pilgrims thought that ONLY the temple itself has its counterpart in heaven, not Jerusalem, the Psalmist teaches that our feet stand in Your gates (plural), referring also to the Jerusalem of the celestial regions. One cannot stand in 2 gates simultaneously, unless the gate one stands in fulfils the dual function of also being the gateway to the Jerusalem of the heavenly regions.

3. The Psalmist explains that the significance of the Jerusalem on earth derives from its being joined, i.e. *chubra yachdav* with its counterpart, celestial Jerusalem.

4. Anyone standing in the "lower" Jerusalem is standing at the same time in the "higher" Jerusalem. The meaning of "there the tribes of Israel ascended, the tribes of the Lord", is an elaboration of that same theme. Who did not know that the tribes of Israel ascended to Jerusalem to proclaim their thanks to the name of the Lord?

The REASON they could be in 2 worlds at the same time is, BECAUSE they are the *shivtey Koh*, the tribes of the Lord, since G'd had sanctified them with the two letters of His name, the letters which He employed to create heaven and earth. (*yud* for heaven and *heh* for earth) Do not be surprised when you hear of Israel standing in two worlds, after all we KNOW that when on Yom Kippur the High Priest pronounced the ineffable name, all the assembled prostrated themselves and stretched out, although previously they had stood shoulder to shoulder, there being no room to spare. This proves that spatial limitations were removed from the people regularly in Jerusalem on the holy days. Just as there are NO such limitations in

ג עֹמְדוֹת הָיוּ רַגְלֵינוּ בִּשְׁעָרַיִךְ יְרוּשָׁלָ‍ִם׃
ד יְרוּשָׁלַ‍ִם הַבְּנוּיָה כְּעִיר שֶׁחֻבְּרָה-לָּהּ יַחְדָּו׃
ה שֶׁשָּׁם עָלוּ שְׁבָטִים שִׁבְטֵי-יָהּ עֵדוּת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְהוֹדוֹת
לְשֵׁם יְהוָה׃
ו כִּי שָׁמָּה יָשְׁבוּ כִסְאוֹת לְמִשְׁפָּט כִּסְאוֹת לְבֵית דָּוִד׃
ז שַׁאֲלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלָ‍ִם יִשְׁלָיוּ אֹהֲבָיִךְ׃

celestial Jerusalem, so there were none in the Jerusalem of our world.

Omdim tzefufim umishtachavim revachim, (Avot 5) they stood pressed together, but they had plenty of room to prostrate themselves, i.e. one of the permanent miracles reported of Jerusalem in the Mishnah in Avot. The Psalmist, by NOT saying *behodot*, i.e. while they were giving thanks, but *lehodot* in order to give thanks, indicates that whenever Israel's purpose in Jerusalem was to thank the Lord, this miracle was in evidence throughout Jerusalem.

In practice this means that the rules applicable to celestial Jerusalem were transferred to terrestrial Jerusalem.

5. The holy spirit now explains that having said this about Jerusalem, we can understand the verse (Chronicles I 29,33) "Solomon sat on the throne of G'd", something that is otherwise completely beyond our comprehension. The idea in Chronicles is that also the seat of justice in Jerusalem is aligned with the seat of justice in the celestial regions, i.e. both Solomon's and G'd's throne, (seat of justice) were situated in celestial Jerusalem. The emanations of the celestial regions embraced those of terrestrial Jerusalem, i.e. *kissot lebeyt David*, is a reference to Solomon's throne as well as that of subsequent worthy kings of Davidic descent. – **6.** The holy spirit emphasizes that not only *beyt Hashem*, the house of G'd deserves an accolade, but that Jerusalem itself is deserving of having its elevated status recognized. In order that we should not think that but for the prayers of the pilgrims Jerusalem would be devoid of its status, the holy spirit adds "those who love you will enjoy serenity", i.e. by asking for the peace of Jerusalem, the pilgrims will receive a portion of this serenity, it is not they who confer serenity on the city.

7. For when this serenity will be like a wall of fire surrounding you – then you Israel will have peace in the palaces you dwell in.

8. The holy spirit speaking as the voice of G'd, says to Israel "you have belittled the honour of the *tzaddikim*, My children, whom I call

[7]May there be well-being within your ramparts, peace in your citadels."
[8]For the sake of my kin and friends, I pray for your well– being; for the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I seek your good.

123 *A song of ascents.*
To You, enthroned in heaven, I turn my eyes.
[2]As the eyes of slaves follow their master's hand, as the eyes of a slave-girl follow the hand of her mistress, so our eyes are toward the LORD our God, awaiting His favor.
[3]Show us favor, O LORD, show us favor!
We have had more than enough of contempt.
[4]Long enough have we endured the scorn of the complacent, the contempt of the haughty.

"My brothers" because they have a common soul with me and My companions, because they share in My task of maintaining the universe which I created, and they have become like My partners".

You belittled them when you said "ask for the peace of Jerusalem" as if Jerusalem NEEDED it, whereas in truth the opposite is true, Jerusalem confers its peace on its pilgrims. G'd teaches David that *tzaddikim* confer their serenity on Jerusalem, hence it is called *yerushalayim habenuyah*, the Jerusalem that has been built up.

9. In this verse David explains that he had credited the honour to Jerusalem, whereas G'd had made Jerusalem's honour dependent on Israel. The true state of affairs is that it is up to us to do our share by giving an accolade of honour to Jerusalem. We must not content ourselves with G'd's humility in crediting the well being of Jerusalem merely to our existence, we must make YOUR honour our principal consideration. Because the house of G'd is in its midst, – I can ask for the good of Jerusalem, David says,

Psalm 123

1. It is apparent that the scholars of the Midrash and the Talmud view this Psalm as referring to Israel in exile. I think that reference is made here to the 4 respective exiles Israel would experience. Concerning the Babylonian exile the Psalmist says "I have raised my eyes to You". Since the Jewish people had a tradition that their exile

ז יְהִי-שָׁלוֹם בְּחֵילֵךְ שַׁלְוָה בְּאַרְמְנוֹתָיִךְ׃
ח לְמַעַן אַחַי וְרֵעָי אֲדַבְּרָה-נָּא שָׁלוֹם בָּךְ׃
ט לְמַעַן בֵּית-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲבַקְשָׁה טוֹב לָךְ׃

קכג א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֵלֶיךָ נָשָׂאתִי אֶת-עֵינַי הַיֹּשְׁבִי בַּשָּׁמָיִם׃
ב הִנֵּה כְעֵינֵי עַבָדִים אֶל-יַד אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם כְּעֵינֵי שִׁפְחָה אֶל-יַד גְּבִרְתָּהּ כֵּן עֵינֵינוּ אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַד שֶׁיְּחָנֵּנוּ׃
ג חָנֵּנוּ יְהוָה חָנֵּנוּ כִּי-רַב שָׂבַעְנוּ בוּז׃
ד רַבַּת שָׂבְעָה-לָּהּ נַפְשֵׁנוּ הַלַּעַג הַשַּׁאֲנַנִּים הַבּוּז לְגַאֲיוֹנִים׃

would last only 70 years, their main concern was the fact that the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, had been exiled also.

The Psalmist expresses this by referring to the *Shechinah* which is constrained, i.e. *hayoshvi bashamayim* to reside (only) in heaven.

Israel's exile temporarily thwarts G'd's desire that the main manifestation of His Presence should be felt on earth, i.e. *ikkar shechinah batachtonim*, within the realm of the creatures in the "lower" world. The people therefore speak in one voice (singular) *nassati*, i.e. I raise my eyes to You, I am anguished that Your Presence is not here with me in my exile.

2. Concerning the exile of the Medes, when we had all been sold to Haman, men, women and children, the Psalmist says "that our eyes, were trained hopefully on G'd like the eys of male slaves on their respective masters, and the eyes of a female slave on her mistress until He would show us grace". It is an admission by the Jewish people that they are indeed G'd's slaves. Examination of the text shows that whereas the men *avadim* pin their hopes on their respective masters, viz. *adoneyehm*, plural, all the women are described by the Psalmist as a single servant maid looking towards ONE mistress, i.e. *gevirtah*. This hints at the fact that whereas the male Jews pleaded with G'd (in the synagogues) only ONE woman (queen Esther) pleaded with her master (king Ahasverus). She actually addressed her prayers to the *Shechinah*, i.e. her true mistress *gevirtah*.

124 *A song of ascents. Of David.*
Were it not for the LORD, who was on our side, let Israel now declare,
2were it not for the LORD, who was on our side when men assailed us,
3they would have swallowed us alive in their burning rage against us;
4the waters would have carried us off, the torrent would have swept over us;

3. Concerning our exile under the Greeks, the appeal was directed to G'd, especially since *rav savanu booz*, we had suffered much shame. The Jewish women had been defiled under Hellenistic practices, also the Greeks had erected idols inside the holy temple.

Concerning the exile under the Roman empire, an exile which we are still experiencing, the Psalmist exclaims that we have suffered an excess of contempt and ridicule from our tormentors, that their arrogance knows no bounds when they question us "where is your G'd"?

Psalm 124

1. This hymn is the holy spirit addressing Israel through the Psalmist, explaining that during the exiles Israel has undergone – it was through G'd's mercy, i.e. *luley Hashem hayah lanu* – unaccompanied by the merit of our patriarchs which had been exhausted – that Israel was saved from utter destruction.

On Daniel 9,14, "G'd hastened the calamity and brought it upon us for the Lord our G'd is righteous in ALL His deeds", our sages ask how the premature destruction of the temple could be described as an act of G'd's righteousness? (Sanhedrin 38)

They explain that the exile of king Yechonyah, 11 years PRIOR to the destruction of the temple and the state, served to prepare the ground for Jewish life in exile once the temple would be destroyed. The Torah (Deut. 4,25–26) had threatened "when you will be long in the land and become corrupt... you shall soon perish utterly". The numerical value of the word *venoshantem*, you will be old, established, is 852. Had destruction of the temple occurred at the end of 852 years after its inauguration instead of after 850 years (440 years from the Exodus the temple had been established, (Kings I 6,1) and it stood for 410 years) the second part of the prophecy, i.e. the utter destruction of the Jewish people would have come true.

קכד א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד לוּלֵי יְהוָה שֶׁהָיָה לָנוּ יֹאמַר-נָא
יִשְׂרָאֵל:
ב לוּלֵא יְהוָה שֶׁהָיָה לָנוּ בְּקוּם עָלֵינוּ אָדָם:
ג אֲזַי חַיִּים בְּלָעוּנוּ בַּחֲרוֹת אַפָּם בָּנוּ:
ד אֲזַי הַמַּיִם שְׁטָפוּנוּ נַחְלָה עָבַר עַל-נַפְשֵׁנוּ:

Premature destruction of the temple was a charitable act by G'd then.

The reason G'd had to involve Himself in this act of righteousness was, that the merit of the patriarchs had been exhausted (Shabbat 55) since the era of king Hezzekiah.

2/3. Also during the exile of the Medes (Ahasverus), had G'd not displayed righteousness when Haman wanted to kill, we would have perished, seeing that one cannot interfere directly with the freely expressed will of a human being. G'd caused Haman to time the DATE of the destruction of the Jews almost 12 months after the decree had been drawn up, giving Mordechai and Esther time to arrange public fasts and activate G'd's mercy through prayer and repentance. Had we not had that breathing spell, they would have swallowed us alive, *chayim be-launu.*

4. The waters referred to in this verse are hyperbole for decrees of destruction. As it was, only *nachlah*, the river bed, i.e. an empty river swept over us. The 3 day fast triggered our survival. (Esther 4,16–17)

5. Referring to the 3rd exile – the period of the Greeks, the Psalmist does not content himself with acknowledging G'd's help, i.e. *luley hashem* in verse 2, but adds *baruch Hashem*, a special benediction, seeing that the Greeks had not aimed at our physical destruction, but had wanted to exterminate the spiritual values of our people. They had demanded that we inscribe the horns of our oxen with the caption "we have no share in the Jewish G'd", and many Jews refused, sanctifying their G'd with their lives. This is why the Psalmist describes those "waters" i.e. decrees, as having passed our soul in "raging waters".

6. The expression *baruch Hashem*, blessed be the Lord, is justified as an acknowledgment that G'd gave those who offered their lives for Him the moral and physical fortitude not to succumb to the threats of their Greek tormentors.

7. By doing so, – "our soul escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowlers" (plural). Those who had escaped *gehinam*, purgatory

5*over us would have swept the seething waters.*
6*Blessed is the LORD, who did not let us be ripped apart by their teeth.*
7*We are like a bird escaped from the fowler's trap; the trap broke and we escaped.*
8*Our help is the name of the LORD, maker of heaven and earth.*

125 *A song of ascents.*
Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion that cannot be moved, enduring forever.
2*Jerusalem, hills enfold it, and the LORD enfolds His people now and forever.*

through their self sacrifice enabled the Hasmoneans (Maccabees) to break out of the net (in their battle against the Greeks) and ultimately we, became free, i.e. the Jewish nation escaped and regained its independence.

8. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in our present long exile. In the forthcoming redemption we have to rely entirely on the promise of G'd that His 2 lettered name (*yud-heh*) will once again become the 4 lettered tetragram upon the utter defeat of Amalek/Esau/Edom. This is what the Psalmist means when he says *ezreynu beshem Hashem osseh shamayim va-aretz*, our sole help is in the name of G'd the maker of heaven and earth. G'd is not described as "who has made heaven and earth", since the redemption of the future is viewed as a renewal of the work of creation as per Isaiah 66, 22: "for as the new heavens and the new earth which I shall make, shall remain before Me... so shall your name and your seed remain".

We have a tradition that this reference is to the spiritual world – seeing the prophet uses the present tense for *osseh*, makes. This is in line with the Zohar who views this "new world" as consisting of Torah and *Mitzvot* who keep Israel alive, since Israel observes Torah and *Mitzvot*.

Clearly, the Psalmist in this verse refers to the *ge-ulah he-atidah*, the final redemption from this 4th exile as being a result of DIRECT action by G'd.

Psalm 125

1. After David had assured the Jewish people in this long exile that just as G'd will restore His name, He will also redeem Israel, David in

ה אֲזַי עָבַר עַל-נַפְשֵׁנוּ הַמַּיִם הַזֵּידוֹנִים:
ו בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה שֶׁלֹּא נְתָנָנוּ טֶרֶף לְשִׁנֵּיהֶם:
ז נַפְשֵׁנוּ כְּצִפּוֹר נִמְלְטָה מִפַּח יוֹקְשִׁים הַפַּח נִשְׁבָּר וַאֲנַחְנוּ נִמְלָטְנוּ:
ח עֶזְרֵנוּ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:

קכה א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת הַבֹּטְחִים בַּיהוָה כְּהַר-צִיּוֹן לֹא-יִמּוֹט לְעוֹלָם יֵשֵׁב:
ב יְרוּשָׁלַם הָרִים סָבִיב לָהּ וַיהוָה סָבִיב לְעַמּוֹ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם:

this Psalm addresses himself to the Jewish people and exhorts them to display faith in G'd, not to despair because of their sins which had caused their exile and the desolation of their country. Although G'd had vented His anger over them and *Eretz Yisrael*, this is a transient stage. Mount Zion will not sway, but G'd will dwell in it forever as we know from Lamentations 5,18–19 "You o G'd remain forever". We have explained there that the meaning of Jeremiah's assurance here is that G'd remains on Mount Zion even though foxes walk up on it. (ibid)

After all, Zion did not sin, on the contrary, it absorbed part of the punishment intended for the people of Israel. Hence it is no more than fair that it will be redeemed by justice (Isaiah 1,27), i.e. it DESERVES redemption, does not require an act of kindness by G'd. Similarly, those who keep their faith with G'd, will be redeemed by G'd's kindness (*tzedakah*).

This is also what Rabbi Akivah meant when he laughed while his companions wept when they saw the foxes on Mount Zion. He explained that the same G'd who had fulfilled the prophecy concerning the foxes (Lamentations 5,18) would also fulfil the prophecy concerning Lamentations 5,19. (compare Makkot 24)

2. Do not despair on account of the length of the exile, nor that the attribute of justice will forever be stretched out over Jerusalem; do not ask how it could be that we suffer so, if G'd indeed is in our midst. Do not give way to the feeling that G'd may have abandoned you. Know therefore that just as Jerusalem is surrounded by mountains both while she was populated and now that she is

3The scepter of the wicked shall never rest upon the land
allotted to the righteous, that the righteous not set their
hand to wrongdoing.
4Do good, O LORD, to the good, to the upright in heart.
5But those who in their crookedness act corruptly, let
the LORD make them go the way of evildoers.
May it be well with Israel!

126 *A song of ascents.*
When the LORD restores the fortunes of Zion —we see
it as in a dream—
2our mouths shall be filled with laughter, our tongues,
with songs of joy.
Then shall they say among the nations, "The LORD has
done great things for them!"

desolate, so G'd surrounds His people also in times when the attribute of justice prevails. So far the holy spirit.

3. Now David replies that he is aware that the rod of wickedness will not rest permanently on the lot of the righteous without arousing G'd's wrath. But, in order that the righteous should not raise their hands in violence at the continued well being of the wicked and the continued suffering of the *tzaddikim*

4. please do good O Lord to the good, i.e. Israel, to those who have remained straightforward in their hearts. When You return to Zion which has not sinned You will also bring back its people; their hearts will be elevated, as You have assured those who have faith in the Lord (verse 1) that the rod of wickedness will not permanently rest on Zion (i.e. the lot of the righteous, *goral hatzaddikim*).

The DELAY before this development materializes worries David – who fears that Israel may lose patience and turn to sin in one form or another.

5. If this verse had been part of the Psalmist's words, it should have read *tolichem* You will lead them. Since it says *yolichem*, i.e. he will lead them, the subject is once again the holy spirit who asks "how about those hypocrites who profess piety while being wicked in their hearts"? David answers – "let G'd make those who openly do evil go", i.e. separate them from the righteous. In this way the hypocrites, when observing the fate of the publicly wicked, will be induced to repent their ways and become righteous, since they will fear that their inner wickedness will be revealed to all. In this way peace will come over all Israel.

ג כִּי לֹא יָנוּחַ שֵׁבֶט הָרֶשַׁע עַל גּוֹרַל הַצַּדִּיקִים לְמַעַן
לֹא-יִשְׁלְחוּ הַצַּדִּיקִים בְּעַוְלָתָה יְדֵיהֶם:
ד הֵיטִיבָה יְהוָה לַטּוֹבִים וְלִישָׁרִים בְּלִבּוֹתָם:
ה וְהַמַּטִּים עֲקַלְקַלּוֹתָם יוֹלִיכֵם יְהוָה אֶת-פֹּעֲלֵי הָאָוֶן
שָׁלוֹם עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל:

קכו א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת בְּשׁוּב יְהוָה אֶת-שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הָיִינוּ
כְּחֹלְמִים:
ב אָז יִמָּלֵא שְׂחוֹק פִּינוּ וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה אָז יֹאמְרוּ בַגּוֹיִם
הִגְדִּיל יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם-אֵלֶּה:

Psalm 126

1. Our sages (Baba Batra 3) in commenting on Haggai 2,9 "greater will be the glory of the latter temple than that of the first temple", state that the prophet did not say the "SECOND temple", but he refers to the "third temple", since the second temple will be inferior to the first temple. We know that 5 essential elements were lacking in the second temple.

The survivors of the first temple who attended the inauguration of the second temple, wept when they noted the absence of the holy ark, and the lid with the cherubs. They noted the absence of the heavenly fire which used to consume the sacrifices, other examples of the Presence of G'd, as well as the Urim and Tumim. (Yuma 21) Their crying at the absence of these items drowned out the rejoicing of the far more numerous younger generation who witnessed the inauguration of the second temple. (Ezra 3,12–13)

The Psalmist speaks about people who had been redeemed from the first exile, as "when G'd returned to Zion, we were like dreamers". Just as in a dream one has rosy visions only to be sadly disappointed by reality when one awakens, so those who returned to Zion at the time of Zerubavel found the new reality inferior to their expectations.

2. However, when the final redemption will come in the future, "then our mouth will fill with laughter", and even though a person whose lips stretch in a smile can normally not speak distinctly at the same time, *ulshonenu rinah*, our tongues will be able to express our

3The LORD will do great things for us and we shall rejoice.
4Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like watercourses in the Negeb.
5They who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy.
6Though he goes along weeping, carrying the seed-bag, he shall come back with songs of joy, carrying his sheaves.

127 *A song of ascents. Of Solomon.*
Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain on it; unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman keeps vigil in vain.
2In vain do you rise early and stay up late, you who toil for the bread you eat; He provides as much for His loved ones while they sleep.

exultation nonetheless. In fact, our joy at that time will spill over to such an extent that even the nations of the world will acknowledge the great things G'd will do for us at that time.

3. It is easy for G'd to impress Jews in exile with good news, since due to their long exile Jews have had to subsist on very little in the way of good news. Even a relatively minor improvement in their status causes them to rejoice. The nations of the world, however, who receive their share of goodness on a regular basis, are less easily impressed. The Psalmist is saying therefore, that when the *ge-ulah sheleymah*, ultimate redemption will come, it will impress EVEN the rest of the world. The nations will say "if G'd had done *immanu*, for us, what He has done for *ayleh*, these people, even we would have been full of joy."

4. We are asking G'd that – thought we know that He will bring redemption – He should NOT do so in small instalments, but should bring the *ge-ulah*, redemption all at once. *Ka-afikim banegev*, just like the springs in the south, which transform a dry landscape instantly into abundantly irrigated land after merely a single rainfall.

5. The holy spirit replies that it will indeed be so, that as soon as those who have sowed with tears will finish sowing, they will reap the harvest in exultation.

6. Even though Israel had been weeping while carrying the measure of seed, it will return in jubilation carrying its sheaves.

ג הַגִּדִּיל יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ הָיִינוּ שְׂמֵחִים:
ד שׁוּבָה יְהוָה אֶת-שְׁבוּתֵנוּ כַּאֲפִיקִים בַּנֶּגֶב:
ה הַזֹּרְעִים בְּדִמְעָה בְּרִנָּה יִקְצֹרוּ:
ו הָלוֹךְ יֵלֵךְ וּבָכֹה נֹשֵׂא מֶשֶׁךְ-הַזָּרַע בֹּא-יָבֹא בְרִנָּה נֹשֵׂא אֲלֻמֹּתָיו:

קכז א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לִשְׁלֹמֹה אִם-יְהוָה לֹא-יִבְנֶה בַיִת שָׁוְא עָמְלוּ בוֹנָיו בּוֹ אִם-יְהוָה לֹא-יִשְׁמָר-עִיר שָׁוְא שָׁקַד שׁוֹמֵר:
ב שָׁוְא לָכֶם מַשְׁכִּימֵי קוּם מְאַחֲרֵי-שֶׁבֶת אֹכְלֵי לֶחֶם הָעֲצָבִים כֵּן יִתֵּן לִידִידוֹ שֵׁנָא:

Psalm 127

1. The essential difference between the third temple and its predecessors is the spiritual nature of the third temple. It will be constructed by G'd Himself, not by human hands. Also, whereas the ultimate construction of the first temple was known beforehand, – and this is why Solomon built a place wherein to hide the holy ark – (compare Chronicles II 35,3 and Talmud in Horiot 12 and Rashi's commentary there)

During the second temple there was no holy ark, seeing that the temple was inferior to Solomon's temple, as we have explained previously. (126,1)

Solomon therefore says that unless G'd builds the temple, any structure resembling a temple is a futile effort by its builders, i.e. all the efforts of those who helped build Solomon's temple have proven to be in vain.

Concerning the second temple, Solomon says, if G'd does not watch over the city – its human guards are wasting their time. (The reference is to Nechemya 4,11–16, when work proceeded on the wall of the city under constant threat of attack by enemies). The really important temple is only the third temple. This is what Solomon wants to convey to us.

2. If you who rise early and lie down late, do so in order to gain advantages in this transient life rather than devote your energies to the accumulation of enduring values, then even the bread you eat

3Sons are the provision of the LORD; the fruit of the womb, His reward.
4Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are sons born to a man in his youth.
5Happy is the man who fills his quiver with them; they shall not be put to shame when they contend with the enemy in the gate.

128 *A song of ascents.*
Happy are all who fear the LORD, who follow His ways.
2You shall enjoy the fruit of your labors; you shall be happy and you shall prosper.

after all your efforts will prove to be only *lechem atzabim*, troubled bread.

However, if you make the acquisition of permanent values your principal concern, He will give you bread to eat in serenity, without exhausting efforts. Seeing that you do not concern yourself with the hereafter, results in G'd granting sleep to the Messiah, i.e. *yedido*. HE has no reason to arouse the Messiah from his sleep, and to begin his task of redeeming the Jewish people from their exile.

3. Should you ask how a person can provide for his children and his household when his main pre-occupation is the acquisition of values which will stand him in good stead in the hereafter, – the Psalmist reminds such a person that the children themselves are a gift from G'd, i.e. *nachalat Hashem banim*, – the very fact that the womb produces children is an act of reward by G'd rather than the natural result of man's efforts.

G'd will certainly NOT withhold the blessing of children, i.e. dividends or accumulated merits, from those righteous people who devote their lives to His priorities, even if those who do not do so are also blessed with offspring.

On the other hand, G'd is NOT obliged to grant material WEALTH to *tzaddikim*. If this were not so, we would be entitled to ask "where are the dividends of Rabbi Chaninah ben Dotha, Rabbi Eleazar ben Pedat, Rabbi Nochmeyni and others like them all of whom devoted their lives to Torah and *mitzvot* and who lived in dire poverty?

The Talmud Baba Batra 78 explains the verse (Numbers 21,27) *al ken yomru hamoshlim bo-u cheshbon, tibaneh vetikonen ir Sichon* as parables referring to those who can control their evil urges by weighing the loss of the reward of a *mitzvah* not performed against

ג הִנֵּה נַחֲלַת יְהוָה בָּנִים שָׂכָר פְּרִי הַבָּטֶן:
ד כְּחִצִּים בְּיַד-גִּבּוֹר כֵּן בְּנֵי הַנְּעוּרִים:
ה אַשְׁרֵי הַגֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר מִלֵּא אֶת-אַשְׁפָּתוֹ מֵהֶם לֹא-יֵבֹשׁוּ
כִּי-יְדַבְּרוּ אֶת-אוֹיְבִים בַּשָּׁעַר:

קכח א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אַשְׁרֵי כָּל-יְרֵא יְהוָה הַהֹלֵךְ בִּדְרָכָיו:
ב יְגִיעַ כַּפֶּיךָ כִּי תֹאכֵל אַשְׁרֶיךָ וְטוֹב לָךְ:

the profit earned by neglecting that *mitzvah*. *Tibaneh – tikonen*, i.e. if you are prepared to forego the immediate material profit through failure to perform the *mitzvah*, you will be built and firmly established, i.e. in a world of permanence etc. The *tibaneh* refers to your children in this world, the *tikonen* to your own standing in the world to come.

4. Arrows held in the hand are more likely to get lost than arrows safely stored in the quiver of the archer. Similarly, youngsters, – due to their impetuous nature, are more likely to forfeit their lives through sin than mature people, whose temptations have already become tamed and subdued.

5. Hence Solomon congratulates the man who retains control over his urge, just as an archer who keeps his arrows in the quiver.

A man who has kept his own urges under control while in his youth, – may also merit that his children in turn will be able to control their urges. They will not put their fathers to shame when confronting their "enemies" at the gateway to *olam haba*, the hereafter.

Not only will such children not be in danger of dying on account of the sins of their fathers, but their own deeds will not reflect discredit upon their parents, as we read in Proverbs 17,6 "the children's conduct is the glory of their fathers".

Psalm 128

1. Some people fear the Lord because they are aware of the weight of their sins and impending retribution; others are like the patriarch Jacob, – who though perfectly righteous and accompanied by G'd's assurances, was nevertheless worried that some unintentional sin could make him forfeit G'd's promises to him.

Concerning the latter category, the Psalmist says that he who fears the Lord although he walks in His ways need not fear.

2. Such a person, in addition to his real reward in the hereafter will

3*Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house;*
your sons, like olive saplings around your table.
4*So shall the man who fears the LORD be blessed.*
5*May the LORD bless you from Zion; may you share the*
prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life,
6*and live to see your children's children.*
May all be well with Israel!

129 *A song of ascents.*
Since my youth they have often assailed me, let Israel
now declare,

also be economically independent enough in this world. This success will consist of 3 phases. 1)He will not need to depend on handouts but sustain himself by his own efforts. (This in spite of the fact that he is a person preoccupied with the study of Torah and performance of its commandments.)

However, such person is NOT assured material WEALTH, since the latter causes a person to worry about preserving it and not losing it.

Although a person who is preoccupied with the study of Torah and the performance of *mitzvot* need not feel badly about being supported by others, just as Issachar did not feel badly about being kept by the earnings of Zebulun, the Psalmist promises additional reward in that such a person will be able to sustain himself without others supporting him.

"Hail to you and *tov lach*", it will be good for you. He will not have to share the merit earned by his way of life. (like Issachar shared same with Zebulun) Therefore the Psalmist says both ***ashrecha***, hail to you, as well as *tov lach* it will be good for you.

3. Concerning the blessing of children, the Psalmist does NOT say ***ishtecha*** with the usual vowel ***ee*** under the letter shin, but ***eshtecha*** with the vowel ***eh***. This is to indicate that the relationship between husband and wife will be characterized by the name of G'd in their respective names, i.e. the ***heh*** in the word *isha* woman and the *yud* in the name *ish* man.

The extra two dots in the vowel ***segol***, ***eh*** under the ***aleph*** indicate that children born of such union will truly have G'd as the third partner in addition to father and mother.

Total success in having offspring comprises 3 elements.

1)That the children are numerous.

2)That all of them live and develop to maturity.

ג אֶשְׁתְּךָ כְּגֶפֶן פֹּרִיָה בְּיַרְכְּתֵי בֵיתֶךָ בָּנֶיךָ כִּשְׁתִלֵי
זֵיתִים סָבִיב לְשֻׁלְחָנֶךָ:
ד הִנֵּה כִי-כֵן יְבֹרַךְ גָּבֶר יְרֵא יְהוָה:
ה יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן וּרְאֵה בְּטוּב יְרוּשָׁלָם כֹּל יְמֵי
חַיֶּיךָ:
ו וּרְאֵה-בָנִים לְבָנֶיךָ שָׁלוֹם עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל:

קכט א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת רַבַּת צָרְרוּנִי מִנְּעוּרַי יֹאמַר-נָא
יִשְׂרָאֵל: ב

3)That they all remain loyal to the traditions taught them by their parents (Torah values).

Concerning the first element, the Psalmist assures us that like a flourishing vine *kegefen poriah*, that there will be many children. Our sages have described the *karmey eyn gedi*, the vineyards of Eyn Gedi as producing 4–5 harvests a year, that while one crop is ripening others are already in various stages of development. (Yalkut Shimoni on Song of Songs 1,14)

Similarly, you will have children that have reached maturity and others in various stages of development. The *y-oh* at the end of the word *pori-yah* refers to the vowel *segol* in *eshtecha*, i.e. the source of your blessing *beyarketey beytecha* which by transposing the letters can be read *berachti beytecha*, I have blessed your house.

This means you will not have to bury any of your children but they will fill the hidden recesses of your house, *yarketey*.

Concerning the third element of success in having children, the Psalmist says "your sons will be like olive shoots around your table", i.e. they will be providing light as teachers of Torah all around your table.

4. The blessings mentioned so far are those which accrue to an ordinary G'd fearing individual. The person who is described as *holech bidrachav* however, is in line for additional blessings, he merits being addressed by G'd individually, directly, instead of through one of G'd's agents such as angels.

5. The blessing will emanate directly from Zion (the seat of the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence); you the recipient will experience the good, i.e. the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Such people will live to see not only children but also grandchildren, and they will experience Israel at

2since my youth they have often assailed me, but they have never overcome me.
3Plowmen plowed across my back; they made long furrows.
4The LORD, the righteous one, has snapped the cords of the wicked.
5Let all who hate Zion fall back in disgrace.
6Let them be like grass on roofs that fades before it can be pulled up,

peace. Such promises parallel the prophetic visions of Zechariah 8,4 "there shall be old men and old women who will dwell in the streets of Jerusalem etc." as well as ibid verse 5, "and the streets of the city will be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof". In this way the *holech bidrachav*, the person who walks in the ways of G'd will experience all 3 possible blessings namely livelihood, children and personal longevity.

Psalm 129

1. While Israel had still been in Egypt, G'd had referred to it as *na-ar*, a lad, as we see from Hoseah 11,1 *ki na-ar yisrael va-ohaveyhu – umimitzrayim karati livni*; "For Israel was a lad and I loved him, and I called out from Egypt to My son". also Jeremiah refers to Israel as *na-ar* when he describes Israel's loyalty to G'd in following G'd into the desert. (Jeremiah 2,2)

The holy spirit is telling Israel – through the mouth of the Psalmist – that they must not think that the present exile is essentially different from that of the exile in Egypt. Since we have the principle that every Jew must view himself as having personally been redeemed from Egypt at the time of the Exodus, (compare haggadah shel Pessach) it would be easy to reason that the oppressions suffered by the Jews in Egypt, or the enmity of Laban etc. were suffered by different Jews and therefore bondage of that kind NEVER recurred. The holy spirit therefore wants to stress that the Jewish people's soul has undergone transmigrations, that the only difference between exile and persecution at that time and exile and persecution in our times is that we have progressed from being mere *na-ar*, mere youngsters. WE have now become an aged people.

Despite the often experienced exile and persecution i.e. *rabat tzeraruni*, they have not prevailed against me. Verse 1 refers to the

ב רַבַּת צָרְרוּנִי מִנְּעוּרָי גַּם לֹא-יָכְלוּ לִי:
ג עַל-גַּבִּי חָרְשׁוּ חֹרְשִׁים הֶאֱרִיכוּ לְמַעֲנוֹתָם:
ד יְהוָה צַדִּיק קִצֵּץ עֲבוֹת רְשָׁעִים:
ה יֵבֹשׁוּ וְיִסֹּגוּ אָחוֹר כֹּל שֹׂנְאֵי צִיּוֹן:
ו יִהְיוּ כַּחֲצִיר גַּגּוֹת שֶׁקַּדְמַת שָׁלַף יָבֵשׁ:

efforts of Laban to exterminate the Jewish people, whereas verse 2 refers to the efforts by the Egyptians.

2. Had our enemies succeeded then, – WE would not have seen the light of day, hence their failure to eliminate our ancestors was also their failure to eliminate us. G'd does good to the ancestors ALSO for the sake of their eventual descendants in the distant future, i.e. for MY sake (the present generation). Our enemies were unable to overcome my ancestors. Not only the merit of our fathers protected earlier generations but also the need for our eventual appearance on the scene of history.

3. They did not only oppress adults who may have sinned, but also children who had certainly been blameless, as we know from Talmud Sotah 11 that Jewish women would go to the fields and give birth, and the earth would open to provide a refuge for the newly born children. The Egyptians ploughed over these fields in order to kill any children hiding under the earth.

Since the Midrash adds that G'd provided nourishment for those children out of two ends of rocks, one releasing honey the other milk, the Psalmist may allude to this by the REPEATED use of *chorshu chorshim*, when a single *chorshu*, they ploughed, would have sufficed. When they saw a mound of earth, the Egyptians not being certain that Jewish infants were below it, continued to plough beyond that area to ensure that such infants would be killed. This is meant by *he-erichu lema-anitam*, they made the furrows extra long.

4. At the time of the Exodus, G'd punished only those who were actively engaged in oppressing Israel such as the *saro shel mitzrayim*, the spiritual force representing Egypt in the celestial regions, plus those Egyptians who pursued Israel at the sea. This is the meaning of *avot resha-im*, the grossly wicked.

5. At the time of the final redemption however, He will deal with ALL those who hate us whether they have translated their hatred into action or whether they merely hate us in their hearts.

6. They will become like the grass on the rooftops, i.e. they will not even reach the age of adulthood, (20 years) the age before which the heavenly tribunal does not normally exact retribution.

7that affords no handful for the reaper, no armful for the gatherer of sheaves,
8no exchange with passersby: "The blessing of the LORD be upon you."
"We bless you by the name of the LORD."

130 *A song of ascents.*
Out of the depths I call You, O LORD.
2O Lord, listen to my cry; let Your ears be attentive to my plea for mercy.
3If You keep account of sins, O LORD, Lord, who will survive?
4Yours is the power to forgive so that You may be held in awe.

7. The definition of who is termed *son-ey tzion* includes all those who prior to our exile already could not speak peaceably about us, saw no merit in us, i.e. those whose reapers could not find even a handful to harvest, nor the sheaf binder enough for an armful.

8. When one observes someone's crop having failed, it is no more than common courtesy to express some sentiment of sympathy for such a farmer; i.e. the passer by extends his blessing in the name of G'd to the stricken farmer. *Son-ey tzion* are those who were not moved when observing Jewish misfortunes prior to the *churban*, destruction of the temple already, who did not extend their sympathy even in response to the blessings which the Jewish people always extended to them.

Psalm 130

1. Although Israel calls upon G'd out of the depth of this interminably long exile, it does NOT address itself to the attribute of justice (*Elokim*), but, aware of the ongoing kindness of G'd, uses the attribute of mercy when calling out to G'd. This insight by Israel is the initial step in the process of its repentance.

2. It continues – justifying its quest – that even the attribute of justice (*a-do-nay*) should be prepared to listen to its entreaties. Israel asks "listen to my spoken appeal – do not examine the state of my heart, which may not yet have done complete *teshuvah*, repentance. If my voice *koli*, is not enough, – listen to my entreaties, *tachanunim*.

3. For if You were always to note my iniquities, Your name would

ז שֶׁלֹּא מִלֵּא כַפּוֹ קוֹצֵר וְחִצְנוֹ מְעַמֵּר:
ח וְלֹא אָמְרוּ הָעֹבְרִים בִּרְכַּת-יְהוָה אֲלֵיכֶם בֵּרַכְנוּ
אֶתְכֶם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה:

קל

א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת מִמַּעֲמַקִּים קְרָאתִיךָ יְהוָה:
ב אֲדֹנָי שִׁמְעָה בְקוֹלִי תִּהְיֶינָה אָזְנֶיךָ קַשֻּׁבוֹת לְקוֹל
תַּחֲנוּנָי:
ג אִם-עֲוֹנוֹת תִּשְׁמָר-יָהּ אֲדֹנָי מִי יַעֲמֹד:
ד כִּי-עִמְּךָ הַסְּלִיחָה לְמַעַן תִּוָּרֵא:

remain incomplete, i.e. the two lettered name *yud heh*. Besides, just as *mi ya-amod*, I could never rise due to my sins, – the fact that the Jewish people would not rise, *sukkat David hanofelet*, would also prevent restoration of Your name to its full glory.

The words *mi ya-amod* are an oblique reference to G'd Himself, the Psalmist not daring to spell out this thought.

4. The solution to all these problems lies with G'd Himself, forgiveness. You are holding back forgiveness because we are not yet G'd fearing. *Lema'an tivareh*, forgiveness can occur only as a result of fear of the Lord.

5. If we ask Your forgiveness nevertheless at this stage, says Israel, it is because I am not asking for MY sake, but to see my longstanding hope fulfilled that YOUR 4 lettered name be restored. Not only my body, i.e. *kiviti*, but my soul, i.e. *nafshi* has always hoped for this even before it inhabited my body. I do not believe that without my prayer You would withhold redemption, – but I have yearned for His word, i.e. a communication that redemption is at hand.

6. If You do not consider my body worthy, since it is not pure, has not been cleansed of sin, please bring the redemption for the sake of my soul and Your holy name. For all the striving of the *Shechinah* (*a-do-nay*) itself is also toward release from its self imposed exile. Inasmuch as my soul is part of the *Shechinah*, it yearns even more for redemption than the souls of the sleeping yearn to be re-awakened each morning from their sleep, and for whose daily awakening we thank You every day with the benediction *hamachazir neshamot lifgarim meytim*, who restores souls to dead bodies.

5I look to the LORD; I look to Him; I await His word.
6I am more eager for the Lord than watchmen for the morning, watchmen for the morning.
7O Israel, wait for the LORD; for with the LORD is steadfast love and great power to redeem.
8It is He who will redeem Israel from all their iniquities.

131 *A song of ascents. Of David.*
O LORD, my heart is not proud nor my look haughty; I do not aspire to great things or to what is beyond me;
2but I have taught myself to be contented like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child am I in my mind.

This is the meaning of Lamentations 3,23 "G'd's mercies are new every morning, Your faithfulness is great".

7. The holy spirit replies "do not despair of the worthiness of the body". As long as Israel will look forward to the redemption not only because of what redemption means to itself, but also because of how it will restore the glory to the *Shechinah*, G'd who is full of loving kindness will do His bit in redeeming Israel even if Israel is devoid of other merits; *harbeh immo pedut*, He has infinite ways of brining redemption.

8. In summation, – if Israel displays concern about the image of G'd in this world, – then G'd in turn will display concern over the standing of Israel among the nations.

Verses 6–8 could also be understood in the following vein. Since Jews commend their souls to G'd nightly, in the conviction that by morning He will restore their souls to their bodies, they are trained to await redemption hopefully. However, the holy spirit advises that their concern should be the restoration of the name of G'd to its full glory. Then, as a result of such concern, G'd will bring on the redemption.

Psalm 131

1. In view of the advice given to Israel in the previous Psalm that their concern should be with the glory of G'd, in order that G'd in turn would display His concern with Israel's standing, Israel might think that its own repentance of its sins was not an important factor in ushering in the redemption.

Therefore, David in this Psalm underlines the extreme importance of acknowledging one's sins, not belittling or excusing them, not pleading extenuating circumstances.

ה קִוִּיתִי יְהוָה קִוְּתָה נַפְשִׁי וְלִדְבָרוֹ הוֹחָלְתִּי:
ו נַפְשִׁי לַאדֹנָי מִשֹּׁמְרִים לַבֹּקֶר שֹׁמְרִים לַבֹּקֶר:
ז יַחֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יְהוָה כִּי-עִם-יְהוָה הַחֶסֶד וְהַרְבֵּה
עִמּוֹ פְדוּת:
ח וְהוּא יִפְדֶּה אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכֹּל עֲוֹנוֹתָיו:

קלא א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד יְהוָה לֹא-גָבַהּ לִבִּי וְלֹא-רָמוּ
עֵינָי וְלֹא-הִלַּכְתִּי בִּגְדֹלוֹת וּבְנִפְלָאוֹת מִמֶּנִּי:
ב אִם-לֹא שִׁוִּיתִי וְדוֹמַמְתִּי נַפְשִׁי כְּגָמֻל עֲלֵי אִמּוֹ כַּגָּמֻל
עָלַי נַפְשִׁי:

David quotes his own conduct as a case in point.

We have explained Rabbi Yochanan's statement (Avodah Zarah 4) that at the time of the golden calf episode Israel was not on a low enough level to commit that sin, nor was David on a morally low enough level to commit the sin with Bat Sheva – but that such sin was allowed to happen in order to demonstrate the efficacy of repentance, that individuals should realize the power of *teshuvah*.

In that connection we had pointed out that the meaning is not that G'd makes Reuben sin in order that Simon would learn about the efficacy of repentance. On the contrary, normally, G'd not only actively helps guard the righteous against committing sins, but He even sees to it that the animals of the *tzaddik* do not sin, i.e. eat grass in someone else's property etc. (Yebamot 99). A *tzaddik* is prone to sin only if he had allowed himself to be mentally seduced in some other area than the temptation presently confronting him.

He might have displayed haughtiness or some other character weakness. David here makes the point that HE had NOT been guilty of any such kind of misconduct which could have triggered his sin; – however, G'd in this instance left him to his own devices, and this is why his *teshuvah*, repentance and its ready acceptance by G'd is such an encouragement to less perfect human beings to repent in the event they commit a sin.

Since the very fact that a generally perfect human being such as David was prone to commit such a serious sin had been demonstrated, this would have given rise to the thought that he could not have been as perfect as had been generally believed, – he had to stress that he had NOT been guilty of the kind of character

3O Israel, wait for the LORD now and forever.

132 *A song of ascents.*
O LORD, remember in David's favor his extreme self-denial
2how he swore to the LORD, vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,
3"I will not enter my house, nor will I mount my bed,
4I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids

weakness which would have provided the logical background to his sin.

2. David continues by saying that despite the fact that he had had no predisposition to this sin, he did not try and blame heaven for his guilt, but accepted full responsibility. When the prophet Nathan had confronted David, – David unreservedly said "I have sinned against G'd". (Samuel II 12,12)

David uses the simile of weaning to describe the fact that if he had taken the attitude that he had been totally dependent on G'd, as an infant is dependent on his mother's breast, such an attitude would have resulted in a total rupture of his relationship with G'd, i.e. he would have been "weaned" of his relationship with G'd. He would have forfeited his holy spirit etc.

David was so busy fasting and inflicting discomfort upon himself that even his soul had begged him to eat, so that it should survive within him. This was similar to Hillel saying that by the act of eating he was performing an act of kindness vis a vis his soul. (Compare Vayikra Rabbah 34,3 on Proverbs 11, 17 "he who does a kindness for his soul is pious.)

3. His advice to Israel therefore is to do likewise, and they too would be successful.

Psalm 132

1. It is not the custom of the righteous to draw their merits to G'd's attention in order for them to become the recipients of G'd's goodness. Nechemyah was punished because he had said "may my Lord remember it for me". (Nechemyah 5,19)

It is also strange that in verse 2, *nedarim*, vows and *shevuot*, oaths, are used interchangeably, although they are distinctly different kinds of undertakings (halachically). Besides, why does the Psalmist

ג יַחֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יְהוָה מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם:

קלב א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת זְכוֹר-יְהוָה לְדָוִד אֵת כָּל-עֻנּוֹתוֹ:
ב אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לַיהוָה נָדַר לַאֲבִיר יַעֲקֹב:
ג אִם-אָבֹא בְּאֹהֶל בֵּיתִי אִם-אֶעֱלֶה עַל-עֶרֶשׂ יְצוּעָי:
ד אִם-אֶתֵּן שְׁנָת לְעֵינָי לְעַפְעַפַּי תְּנוּמָה:

in this instance use the term *avir Yaakov* when describing G'd? Besides, the Psalmist in verse 3 speaks about "the tent of my house", a patent contradiction in terms? Also, why the awkward expression *eress yetzu-i* instead of the simple *arssi*, my bed, in the same verse? Why does David use clumsy language such as *im etten shenat le-eynay* and *le-aphappy tenumah* instead of the straightforward *shaynah* sleep?

The indeterminate duration of the lack of sleep vowed, (as per verse 5) is puzzling, since the Psalmist had no idea when he would find the place of the Lord. Perhaps it would take years, and his oath would be frivolous, seeing it pertained to matters beyond his control?

Why would the Psalmist refer to more than one dwelling place of G'd, i.e. *mishkenot*? What had he heard about in Efrata?

David's concern was that G'd would extend His blessing to the handiwork of his son Solomon. This is why he prefaced his remarks by referring to his own merits.

2. He begins by listing the fact that he had sworn an oath to G'd who is the G'd who had responded to the vow of his forefather Jacob when the latter had begun his journey to Laban. (Genesis 28,20)

3. His oath had been that he would not make use of the special bed provided for a king in the *ohel*, i.e. of his palace; neither would he lie down on the special mattress etc. another Royal prerogative. The term "oath" rather than "vow" applies, since an oath applies to the person swearing it, whereas a vow refers to objects. The objects in this case only serve as examples of the locations where David's oath was to apply.

4. In this verse David spells out the nature of his vow.

In order for the vow to correspond to the halachic rules for vows, the subjects of the vow must be objectivized, i.e. instead of "I will not sleep" (which would be an oath) "I will not give sleep to my eyes". In this way, David's eyes become the subject of his vow. Similarly, his

5until I find a place for the LORD, an abode for the Mighty One of Jacob."
6We heard it was in Ephrath; we came upon it in the region of Jaar.
7Let us enter His abode, bow at His footstool.
8Advance, O LORD, to Your resting-place, You and Your mighty Ark!
9Your priests are clothed in triumph; Your loyal ones sing for joy.
10For the sake of Your servant David do not reject Your anointed one.
11The LORD swore to David a firm oath that He will not renounce, "One of your own issue I will set upon your throne.
12If your sons keep My covenant and My decrees that I teach them, then their sons also, to the end of time, shall sit upon your throne."

eyelids become the subject of his vow. By using the possessive ***shenat*** instead of sleep, ***shaynah*** in the nominative, David makes it plain that he refers only to regular sleep, not to brief naps. In this fashion the subject of his vow is something within his ability to carry out.

5. David could not be precise in stating when his vow would be fulfilled, since not every place is suitable to become the site of G'd's temple, and it was this site that he had had in mind to locate and secure. This site had to be sacred already by definition, could not merely be hallowed after acquisition. It is the gateway to heaven, the site from which G'd had taken earth to form Adam the first human being. It was the site where Adam and Noah had offered sacrifices, where Isaac had been bound and which Jacob had proclaimed as "the Lord is indeed present in this place". (Genesis 28,16)

The reason David refers to two dwellings is, because this must be the place where two dwellings of G'd are fused, i.e. the celestial temple and the man made temple. *Avir Yaakov* is a reminder of the G'd who had appeared to Jacob on the top of the ladder in his dream, causing him to exclaim: "this is the house of the Lord and the gateway to heaven". (Genesis 28,17)

6. Should one reply that David should simply proceed to that site, his answer is that this is presently not possible. Originally it had been assumed, i.e. ***shamaanu***, that this site was in Efrat, i.e. between Luz and Jerusalem, and that the feet of the ladder in Jacob's dream had

ה עַד-אֶמְצָא מָקוֹם לַיהוָה מִשְׁכָּנוֹת לַאֲבִיר יַעֲקֹב:
ו הִנֵּה שְׁמַעֲנוּהָ בְאֶפְרָתָה מְצָאנוּהָ בִּשְׂדֵי-יָעַר:
ז נָבוֹאָה לְמִשְׁכְּנוֹתָיו נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לַהֲדֹם רַגְלָיו:
ח קוּמָה יְהוָה לְמְנוּחָתֶךָ אַתָּה וַאֲרוֹן עֻזֶּךָ:
ט כֹּהֲנֶיךָ יִלְבְּשׁוּ-צֶדֶק וַחֲסִידֶיךָ יְרַנֵּנוּ:
י בַּעֲבוּר דָּוִד עַבְדֶּךָ אַל-תָּשֵׁב פְּנֵי מְשִׁיחֶךָ:
יא נִשְׁבַּע-יְהוָה לְדָוִד אֱמֶת לֹא-יָשׁוּב מִמֶּנָּה מִפְּרִי
בִטְנְךָ אָשִׁית לְכִסֵּא-לָךְ:
יב אִם-יִשְׁמְרוּ בָנֶיךָ בְּרִיתִי וְעֵדֹתִי זוֹ אֲלַמְּדֵם גַּם-
בְּנֵיהֶם עֲדֵי-עַד יֵשְׁבוּ לְכִסֵּא-לָךְ:

stood in Luz, and moved, but that it normally was the site of the town of Efrat. The revelation by the prophet Gad that the true site was owned by Arnon whose threshing ground was designated as the site of the temple, was something that had not previously occurred to anyone.

7. As a result of the revelation by the prophet Gad (Chronicles I, 21,18) we are now able to come to His dwellings and worship etc. By entering the temple down here on earth, we simultaneously enter the sanctuary in heaven. This is why David can speak of *mishkenotav*, His dwellings (plural).

The reference to bowing to His footstool refers to service in the earthly temple, described by Isaiah as "His footstool". (Isaiah 66,1)

8. Therefore David calls on G'd to join the holy ark in the terrestrial temple, i.e. not only because the earth is His footstool, but so that it can join the holy ark in the "junior temple".

9. We know that when Solomon wanted to bring the holy ark into the temple, the gates would not open despite all of Solomon's prayers, until he invoked his father David's merit. (Shabbat 30) When this happened, the faces of David's one time enemies turned green. David may be saying there that since G'd's Presence will be with the holy ark, it should be easy to bring it inside the temple; nonetheless he asks that also the priests should don their holy garments and that the pious should recite prayers of joy.

10. Despite all this however, David wants it to be demonstrated that it is through his own merit that the holy ark would be allowed to come to rest in its rightful place when the temple would be

13*For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His seat.*
14*"This is my resting-place for all time; here I will dwell, for I desire it.*
15*I will amply bless its store of food, give its needy their fill of bread.*
16*I will clothe its priests in victory, its loyal ones shall sing for joy.*

completed. Only in this way would G'd's forgiveness for his sin with Bat Sheva be demonstrated publicly.

11–12. The holy spirit replies by saying that G'd will do even more for him, even prior to the dedication of the temple. David had asked G'd that Solomon should be his successor on the throne so that the people would know that G'd had forgiven him. This promise is contained in this verse, i.e. G'd said any OTHER son of David would ascend the throne only if his own conduct warranted it. No such condition is attached to Solomon ascending David's throne, however. The meaning of *nishba Hashem ledavid*, G'd swore it to David means that succession to David's throne had been made conditional, see verse 12.

There we are told that whereas the kingship will not be taken away from his son, – regardless of the son's conduct, it WOULD be taken away from subsequent generations. None of these conditions apply to Solomon himself, however. We find this confirmed in Kings I 11,12, when G'd tells Solomon that the split of his kingdom would not occur during his lifetime – as a concession to the merit of his father David.

13. In Kings I 8,16, we read as follows: "Since the day I took My people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city from all the tribes of Israel to build a house for My name to dwell in, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel". The second half of this verse does not match the first half. Either it should have said "I have not chosen a city – and now I have chosen Zion", or it should have said "I have not chosen any man...and now I have chosen David".

The fact that the verse makes the selection of a city subject to the selection of a certain person to whom G'd entrusts His Presence (*Shechinah*) is what the holy spirit alludes to in our verse. When G'd revealed that He had chosen Zion, it was because David had made it his capital. Had G'd not wanted to make David (in his capacity of the Messiah) the carrier of His entourage (*merkavah*), He might not have selected Zion as the site of His temple. (compare Redak)

יג כִּי-בָחַר יְהוָה בְּצִיּוֹן אִוָּה לְמוֹשָׁב לוֹ׃
יד זֹאת-מְנוּחָתִי עֲדֵי-עַד פֹּה אֵשֵׁב כִּי אִוִּתִיהָ׃
טו צֵידָהּ בָּרֵךְ אֲבָרֵךְ אֶבְיוֹנֶיהָ אַשְׂבִּיעַ לָחֶם׃
טז וְכֹהֲנֶיהָ אַלְבִּישׁ יֶשַׁע וַחֲסִידֶיהָ רַנֵּן יְרַנֵּנוּ׃

14. The holy spirit replies: "apart from the fact that I have selected you David as carrier of My entourage, I have also selected the site for its innate suitability, but I would not have made My selection public AT THIS TIME; rather I would have revealed this information in a much more gradual manner.

The advantage of this site over the others which had served as sites for the tabernacle is that in those places the *Shechinah* could not find a permanent residence. Once the *Shechinah* came to rest in Zion, its Presence was no longer linked to the existence of a tabernacle or temple. The *Shechinah* has never departed from Zion (Western Wall) even after the temple had been destroyed. (Shemot Rabbah 2,2)

In the future, G'd will reside there, at that time the desire G'd expressed at the time of the creation to have a permanent residence in our world will be realized. (Bereshit Rabbah 3,12)

15. Concerning the point in history when all this will be realized, G'd says "I will bless even the destitute with abundance and satisfy them with bread". Our sages have remarked that in the future the land of Israel would produce superior white bread (cake like). (Shabbat 30) They have based this on Psalms 72, 16 "may grain grow to the top of the mountains". The blessings are enumerated in ascending order, commencing with *tzeydah*, sustenance. By doing so, the value of bread as a blessing is enhanced.

The Torah states that there will be no scarcity of other crops, in fact the land of Israel *lo techsar kol bo* will not be deficient in ANY respect, not in agricultural products nor in mineral wealth. The reason people will eat only bread is because the quality of its bread makes it the most superior food available.

G'd promises that though all kinds of sustenance will be blessed, i.e.*tzeydah barech avarech*, the poor will choose to be satisfied with bread because this will be the greatest delicacy then.

16. Since on the one hand at the dedication ceremonies of the temple, the prayers of the priests and the known pious had remained unanswered, and the gates did not open to admit the holy ark till David's merit was mentioned, (verse 10) the priests and pious will be compensated for their loss of face at that time by being dressed in

17 *There I will make a horn sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for My anointed one.*
18 *I will clothe his enemies in disgrace while on him his crown shall sparkle."*

133 *A song of ascents. Of David.*
How good and how pleasant it is that brothers dwell together.
2 *It is like fine oil on the head running down onto the beard, the beard of Aaron, that comes down over the collar of his robe;*

yesha, salvation, and the pious shouting for joy, since at that time wearing of the holy garments will not be a necessary prelude to offering sacrifices in order to hasten the redemption. Rather, the very fact that they will put on these garments will constitute salvation and cause them to shout for joy, just as at the time when Israel had crossed the sea of reeds.

17. Do not be surprised that at the dedication of Solomon's temple it had NOT been so. At THAT time, G'd had to show that David's sin had been forgiven. In the future when G'd will make David's horn sprout and his light shine, there will be no need to show that G'd loves him. On the contrary, the faces of his enemies will be full of shame. At the dedication of the first temple, *arachti ner limshichi*, I had only made a lamp for My anointed, i.e. he had not yet shone forth.

18. Through the shame experienced by David's enemies and their subsequent repentance, David's crown will be enhanced, i.e. *ve-alav yatzitz nizro* his crown will blossom upon him in the "higher" world. Or, David's "crown" is a reference to his son Solomon whose standing will be enhanced through realization that G'd had forgiven his father.

Psalm 133

1. Seeing that all of Israel shares one soul, i.e. is part of G'd, and only through the fact that we are many different bodies does it appear that all our souls are totally unconnected, – G'd commanded us "love your fellow Jews like yourself", (Leviticus 19,18) since we are after all brothers, sons of the same father in heaven.

Especially, in view of the fact that the second temple was lost due to fratricide, senseless hatred amongst different Jewish factions (Yuma 9), the Psalmist stresses that the hoped for blessings are

יז שָׁם אַצְמִיחַ קֶרֶן לְדָוִד עָרַכְתִּי נֵר לִמְשִׁיחִי:
יח אוֹיְבָיו אַלְבִּישׁ בֹּשֶׁת וְעָלָיו יָצִיץ נִזְרוֹ:

קלג א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד הִנֵּה מַה-טּוֹב וּמַה-נָּעִים שֶׁבֶת אַחִים גַּם-יָחַד:
ב כַּשֶּׁמֶן הַטּוֹב עַל-הָרֹאשׁ יֹרֵד עַל-הַזָּקָן זְקַן-אַהֲרֹן שֶׁיֹּרֵד עַל-פִּי מִדּוֹתָיו:

contingent on this unity. After all *Yisrael goy echad ba-aretz* (Chronicles I 17,21), Israel is supposed to be a uniquely unified nation. The holy spirit addresses itself to Israel with this message. It is not enough to be of the same soul, – unity must also be apparent in the manner in which the bodies inhabited by the respective parts of each soul live together in harmony and brotherhood.

2. The holy spirit employs a known instance of brotherly love and absence of competitiveness, to teach us how to apply this lesson in our national life. When Aaron, the older brother, heard of his younger brother's Moses' promotion to the position of leadership of the Jewish nation, (a post he had occupied up to that time) he did not only not begrudge Moses the honour, but rejoiced for him. (Exodus 4,14) The Midrash Hagadol on Leviticus 8,12 in the name of Rav Papa says, that when Aaron was anointed as High Priest (Leviticus 8,12) 2 drops of oil of anointment spilled on to the edges of his beard and looked like two pearls for all to see. This was in order to demonstrate that though Moses had taken over the position formerly held by his older brother, Aaron's altruistic behaviour made him G'd's choice as High Priest. The bottom of the beard is at the level of the neck where one normally wears pearls.

The holy spirit describes here how precious this type of behaviour is in the eys of G'd. Only Aaron is reported in the Midrash as having 2 drops of oil running down his beard, not the others who had been anointed with the same oil.

3. In this verse the Psalmist illustrates the difference between the abundance granted from on high when there is friction between people, and the abundance granted from the same source when people live in brotherhood and harmony. The dew which descends on Mount Hermon – especially in winter, symbolizes frigid relationships, is wasted, turns to snow and ice, does not promote growth, crops etc.

3*like the dew of Hermon that falls upon the mountains of Zion.*
There the LORD ordained blessing, everlasting life.

134 *A song of ascents.*
Now bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD who stand nightly in the house of the LORD.
2*Lift your hands toward the sanctuary and bless the LORD.*
May the LORD, maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion.

135 *Hallelujah.*
Praise the name of the LORD; give praise, you servants of the LORD

Contrast this with the dew that covers the mountain of Zion, which is beneficial at all times.

Our sages tell us (Sifri Nasso 6,26) that when there is friction among Israel there can be no effective blessing, since the only vessel that can retain blessing is *shalom*, peace and harmony.

Therefore, when Israel is not unified, G'd directs the dew that was intended for Zion to Mount Hermon, also known as *snir* or *tor talgo*, the snowy mountain, seeing it is snow capped both in winter and in summer.

When Israel is united, this dew is directed by G'd to Mount Zion as additional blessing. Just as freedom from the angel of death had been achieved by Israel once at Mount Sinai prior to the revelation (compare *vayichan Yisrael*, Israel camped in unison like one man, Exodus 19,2) only to be lost again due to the sin of the golden calf, so in the future, permanent freedom from the angel of death will be achieved through unity and Mount Zion.

Psalm 134

1. We know from Isaiah 1,15, "also if you will pray a great deal... I will not listen while your hands are full of blood," – that G'd does not respond to the prayers of people whose wealth is the result of oppression and abuse of their fellow man.

We also know that since the temple has been destroyed, "G'd only has the synagogue on this earth, inasmuch as this is called the miniature temple". (Compare Psalms 87,2.)

ג כְּטַל-חֶרְמוֹן שֶׁיֹּרֵד עַל-הַרְרֵי צִיּוֹן כִּי שָׁם צִוָּה יְהוָה
אֶת-הַבְּרָכָה חַיִּים עַד-הָעוֹלָם:

קלד א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת הִנֵּה בָּרְכוּ אֶת-יְהוָה כָּל-עַבְדֵי יְהוָה
הָעֹמְדִים בְּבֵית-יְהוָה בַּלֵּילוֹת:
ב שְׂאוּ-יְדֵכֶם קֹדֶשׁ וּבָרְכוּ אֶת-יְהוָה:
ג יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:

קלה א הַלְלוּיָהּ הַלְלוּ אֶת-שֵׁם יְהוָה הַלְלוּ עַבְדֵי יְהוָה:

Seeing that in the last 2 Psalms all the wonderful things G'd will do for Israel have been described, the Psalmist now urges all those who may describe themselves as servants of the Lord, to bless the Lord who will perform all these deeds for the sake of restoring His 4 lettered name to glory. Especially those people who spend time in the synagogues during the exile (a period described as nightime), since G'd is apt to listen to those people, especially.

2. However, the proviso is that you raise your hands in holiness, that you are not guilty of oppressing your fellow man. When your hands are clean, – G'd will listen to your prayers immediately. In fact, – when you are pure, G'd will respond to your blessing Him even before you address your requests to Him.

3. Those who spend their time in the Torah academies are on an even higher level than those who spend their time in the synagogues, since the Zohar describes those people as truly *deveykim Bashem*, attached to G'd.

It is THOSE people who create the spiritual content of heaven and earth. Through their discovery of ever new insights in their Torah studies, they are as if creating heaven and earth anew. Since there are only very few people of such calibre, the Psalmist refers to them in the singular, i.e. *Osseh* instead of *ossey* (plural). These people receive the blessing of G'd from Zion, since the *Shechinah* never departed from there completely.

Psalm 135

1. "Praise the 2 lettered name of G'd, AND also praise His 4 lettered name (tetragram)". The first category of people, those who

[2]who stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God.
[3]Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing hymns to His name, for it is pleasant.
[4]For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel, as His treasured possession.
[5]For I know that the LORD is great, that our LORD is greater than all gods.
[6]Whatever the LORD desires He does in heaven and earth, in the seas and all the depths.
[7]He makes clouds rise from the end of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain; He releases the wind from His vaults.

praise His name *yud-heh* are the *yotzey mitzrayim* the Israelites who had been redeemed from bondage in Egypt. At that time that whole generation underwent a change in status and became servants of the Lord, i.e. they became *ovdey Hashem*.

Previously they had been slaves of Pharaoh, but G'd had said (Leviticus 25,25) "for the children of Israel are My servants". At that time the world order had been renewed by means of the *otot and moftim*, the various supernatural miracles performed by G'd.

2. The other generations, the ones that witnessed the building of the temple, are urged by the Psalmist to praise G'd's 4 lettered name. They are those servants of the Lord who are privileged to stand in the precincts of the temple and its courtyard. Only within those precincts may the 4 lettered name of G'd be used.

Alternatively, verse 2 would be the justification for using G'd's 4 lettered name within the precincts of the temple. Since we explained previously that when one stands in the temple in our world, one is simultaneously in the celestial temple, the Psalmist describes the terrestrial temple as *chatzerot* courtyards of the celestial sanctuary.

3. If you were to say that after all the Exodus was a manifestation of G'd's 4 lettered name since we read "and Egypt will know that I am the Lord" (tetragram) (Exodus 7,5,14,4 and others), therefore why praise the Lord merely by using His 2 lettered name?

The Psalmist repeats "for the Lord is good", 1)to remind you that the manifestation of G'd as a 2 lettered name – the letters with which He created Heaven and earth – demonstrated to you that He was the Creator, and showed that He is good to you. If you praise Him using the 4 lettered name once the temple is built, – that is

ב שֶׁעֹמְדִים בְּבֵית יְהוָה בְּחַצְרוֹת בֵּית אֱלֹהֵינוּ:
ג הַלְלוּיָהּ כִּי-טוֹב יְהוָה זַמְּרוּ לְשְׁמוֹ כִּי נָעִים:
ד כִּי-יַעֲקֹב בָּחַר-לוֹ יָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לִסְגֻלָּתוֹ:
ה כִּי אֲנִי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי-גָדוֹל יְהוָה וַאֲדֹנֵינוּ מִכָּל-אֱלֹהִים:
ו כֹּל אֲשֶׁר-חָפֵץ יְהוָה עָשָׂה בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ בַּיַּמִּים וְכָל
-תְּהֹמוֹת:
ז מַעֲלֶה נְשִׂאִים מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ בְּרָקִים לַמָּטָר עָשָׂה
מוֹצֵא רוּחַ מֵאוֹצְרוֹתָיו:

because He has continued to remain close to you, has not distanced Himself from you (like a painter once he has completed a painting) but has demonstrated His liking for you by residing in the temple you have built.

4. Another reason that the Psalmist urges the praising of the 2 lettered name of G'd is, that as long as Israel had been known as "Jacob", i.e. was on a lower moral niveau, it chose to praise G'd as Creator of heaven and earth (*yud-heh*) to implant in themselves the awareness of the renewal of the act of creation that had taken place in Egypt. Once they had qualified for the appellation "Israel", it commemorated *segulato*, its new found status of being "precious" by acknowledging the G'd who had created the world, i.e. the letters *yud* and *heh*.

5. But – it continues, – that Israel is aware that G'd is MORE than what is represented by His two lettered name, that He is composed of far more facets, i.e. that only the tetragram would describe Him adequately.

6. He is completely free to do whatever He chooses anywhere, thus demonstrating His *adnut*, authority and sovereignty.

7. He has demonstrated this freedom by employing agents when no agents had been needed. G'd did not need lightning in order to cause rain, nor did He need the wind. If He employs these agents nonetheless, He does so to demonstrate His control over all the forces of nature. This is especially clear, when we consider that lightning, i.e. fire is the most unlikely agent to assist in producing rain, i.e. water.

8. A further proof of G'd's personal supervision of what goes on in His universe was that He personally smote the Egyptian first born both humans and beasts.

[8]He struck down the first-born of Egypt, man and beast alike;
[9]He sent signs and portents against Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants;
[10]He struck down many nations and slew numerous kings— [11]Sihon, king of the Amorites, Og, king of Bashan, and all the royalty of Canaan—
[12]and gave their lands as a heritage, as a heritage to His people Israel.
[13]O LORD, Your name endures forever, Your fame, O LORD, through all generations;
[14]for the LORD will champion His people, and obtain satisfaction for His servants.

9. In the event that such PERSONAL involvement by G'd would be interpreted as being below His dignity, – He employs agents on other occasions, such as for the remainder of the plagues in Egypt *otot umoftim.*

The usage of direct speech, i.e. ***betochechi*** in your midst, instead of ***betocho*** in its midst, suddenly in the middle of this sentence is as if the Psalmist addresses Moses and Aaron as potential witnesses who can testify that it had indeed been so, i.e. that they had been G'd's agents for the other plagues.

10–11. One can question G'd's personal involvement by asking why it is that G'd did NOT wipe out all the Egyptians though they had persecuted Israel, whereas He caused His agents to wipe out all the people of the kingdoms of Sichon and Og respectively? After all, those people had had no record of persecuting Israel? The answer given by the Psalmist is that since the lands of Sichon and Og had been designated to become the inheritance of the Jewish people since the days of Abraham, the people had long forfeited their right to the land, however Israel only NOW claimed its heritage.

12. The land of Egypt NOT having been designated as the land of Israel, enabled a large part of Egypt's population to escape death at that time.

13. Having previously stated who is to employ the 2 lettered name of G'd and who employs His 4 lettered name, there remains the question why the 2 lettered name of G'd is always pronounced in accordance with the way it is written, whereas the 4 lettered name of G'd is pronounced as ***adnut*** (authority) such as in Exodus 3,15. The Talmud Kidushin 71, explains, that G'd says "though My name is

ח שֶׁהָכָה בְּכוֹרֵי מִצְרַיִם מֵאָדָם עַד-בְּהֵמָה:
ט שָׁלַח אֹתוֹת וּמוֹפְתִים בְּתוֹכֵכִי מִצְרַיִם בְּפַרְעֹה וּבְכָל-
עֲבָדָיו:
י שֶׁהִכָּה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים וְהָרַג מְלָכִים עֲצוּמִים:
יא לְסִחוֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֱמֹרִי וּלְעוֹג מֶלֶךְ הַבָּשָׁן וּלְכֹל
מַמְלְכוֹת כְּנָעַן:
יב וְנָתַן אַרְצָם נַחֲלָה נַחֲלָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹ:
יג יְהוָה שִׁמְךָ לְעוֹלָם יְהוָה זִכְרְךָ לְדֹר-וָדֹר:
יד כִּי-יָדִין יְהוָה עַמּוֹ וְעַל-עֲבָדָיו יִתְנֶחָם:

spelled with the letters *yud* and *heh*, it is pronounced as if it had been spelled with the letters *aleph* and *dalet*".

Hence the Psalmist says "Your name of the 4 letters though constant and valid for all times, i.e. *le-olam*, can be mentioned in the way it is spelled i.e. *zichrecha* only at a future time, i.e. *ledor vador*, in a future generation.

If Israel merits it, that time will be *ledor* (sing.) such time may arrive already within a single generation, – if not, such time will be deferred i.e. *vador* to a more distant generation.

This is parallel to the commentary of our sages on Isaiah 60,22 *ani Hashem, be-itto achishenah*, I the Lord, at the appointed time I will hasten it. Sanhedrin 98 comments that the meaning of Isaiah's statement is that if Israel does NOT merit it, the redemption will come at the time appointed by G'd in advance. If Israel merits it however G'd will accelerate His timetable, i.e. *achishenah*.

14. The time when Your name can be pronounced as it is spelled, will be when G'd will judge His people, i.e. when He will avenge Himself of Amalek. The word *ki* in this context means *ka-asher*, when. In order to assure Israel that at that time G'd will not find Israel wanting, and condemn it (*yadin ammo* could have such a connotation) the Psalmist uses the attribute of mercy when referring to G'd in His capacity as judge. Normally, we would have expected *yadin elokim*. All of Israel who have not forsaken their religion for another, are included in the reference to *avadav* His servants.

Yitnachem, – G'd will display regret concerning the counsel that had previously prevailed about the future fate of the Jewish people.

15*The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.*
16*They have mouths, but cannot speak; they have eyes, but cannot see;*
17*they have ears, but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouths.*
18*Those who fashion them, all who trust in them, shall become like them.*
19*O house of Israel, bless the LORD; O house of Aaron, bless the LORD;*
20*O house of Levi, bless the LORD; you who fear the LORD, bless the LORD.*
21*Blessed is the LORD from Zion, He who dwells in Jerusalem.*
Hallelujah.

15. The nations worship idols which are the opposite of themselves. Whereas human bodies are superior but transient, will decay upon death, – they construct their deities from durable materials which however lack the beauty and functional appeal of the human form. They are so devoid of quality, i.e. the ingredient that makes something alive, that they cannot even perform such basic functions as speaking, seeing, hearing and smelling.

16. Even if some of their deities APPEAR to perform some of the human functions listed, this is only due to magic, it is not really their mouths which produce sounds similar to speech, but some other force.

17. Also, if their ears appear to respond to some sounds, it is not really their ears that hear, but some alien spirit that is within their "mouths", *eyn yesh*, there is no substance to any such apparent functions performed by these idols.

18. Should you counter that after all these idols do make pronouncements concerning the future even if they cannot be considered "live" in the accepted sense, the Psalmist expresses the wish that the spirits that dwell within them should be just like the product that they have fashioned, since anyone who puts his trust in them will never feel at ease.

These strange spirits are not homogeneous to human nature, and will not allow those whom they inhabit have peace of mind. Even if on occasion such spirits may reveal something they have overheard in extra terrestrial regions, – they do not possess the power to do anything about what they have heard.

טו עֲצַבֵּי הַגּוֹיִם כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אָדָם:
טז פֶּה לָהֶם וְלֹא יְדַבֵּרוּ עֵינַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִרְאוּ:
יז אָזְנַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יַאֲזִינוּ אַף אֵין-יֵשׁ-רוּחַ בְּפִיהֶם:
יח כָּמוֹהֶם יִהְיוּ עֹשֵׂיהֶם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹטֵחַ בָּהֶם:
יט בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּרְכוּ אֶת-יְהוָה בֵּית אַהֲרֹן בָּרְכוּ אֶת-יְהוָה:
כ בֵּית הַלֵּוִי בָּרְכוּ אֶת-יְהוָה יִרְאֵי יְהוָה בָּרְכוּ אֶת-יְהוָה:
כא בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן שֹׁכֵן יְרוּשָׁלָם הַלְלוּיָהּ:

They lack the element essential to any deity, the power to influence events. How then can man put something on a pedestal that is so much inferior even to himself?!

Therefore, G'd will judge His nation; He will compare it to those nations and their practices. We will then appear meritorious by comparison, since we have remained loyal to our G'd, to whom alone we have directed our praises.

19. Then the house of Israel – because they bless the Lord – will be found innocent on that day of judgment. This is no reason to be self congratulatory however, since but for the fortuitous circumstance of having been born a member of the Jewish people you would not be blessing the Lord your G'd. Hence, give thanks, i.e. bless the Lord for your good fortune to have been born Jewish. This is why we say daily in our prayers "blessed be the Lord... who has not made me a gentile".

20. Then the house of Levi – bless the Lord!, finally the G'd fearing individuals, bless the Lord!, i.e. those who do not require to offer sacrifices to atone for sins. The priests who had offered the Israelites' sacrifices are mentioned second, as the sacrifices they offered had been paid for by the Israelites. The Levites who had not offered sacrifices, but had sung hymns accompanying the sacrifices are next in line to bless the Lord. Finally, the *yerey hashem* though they had been able to survive on their own merit – are asked to bless the Lord.

21. Since eventually we are to bless the Lord by using His full name, one could query why the Psalm commenced with the call to bless the Lord using His 2 lettered name! Why not praise the Lord with His 4 lettered name WHICH INCLUDES His 2 lettered name?

136 *Praise the LORD; for He is good, His steadfast love is eternal.*
2Praise the God of gods, His steadfast love is eternal.
3Praise the LORD of lords, His steadfast love is eternal;
4Who alone works great marvels, His steadfast love is eternal;

We must first understand the entire concept of man "blessing" the Lord. How can puny man, a mere creature, be expected to bless the Lord? Even the best man, the one who is equipped with the merit of Torah acquired in Zion, – *ki mitziyon tetze Torah*, for true Torah emanates from Zion, (Isaiah 2,3) and even at a time when G'd resides in Jerusalem, how can priests, Levites even ordinary Israelites serve in it effectively? i.e. do things for G'd as one serves a human king for instance? The Psalmist reminds us that *ki be-y-ah Hashem tzur olamim*, that the celestial regions are the work of the letter *yud*, and the earth is the work of the letter *heh* (Isaiah 26,4).

Our DIRECT relationship with G'd is 1)via our soul (our celestial part) – i.e. part of what is represented by the *yud* in His name, plus 2)the fact that He has made a residence for Himself on earth, i.e. the *heh* in His name. Together this establishes the bond between us and G'd.

This relationship is a two way street. G'd is blessed by the spiritual part of man, i.e. his soul, through Zion, as well as through the physical part, i.e. the presence of the altar for sacrifices in Jerusalem representing the "materialized" hold G'd has on this earth.

We must praise the Lord for these 2 factors by referring specifically to those two letters in His name which have enabled us, Israel, to acquire significance though we are merely His creatures.

Psalm 136

1. We have mentioned earlier that there are times when G'd has to be praised by referring to His 2 lettered name, whereas there are other times when it is appropriate to praise the Lord using His 4 lettered name. Now the Psalmist says that the Lord DESERVES to be praised, i.e. His 4 lettered name, since His kindness extends universally. If at times, we are not to employ the 4 lettered name, this is a reflection on us, not on Him. The reason that we may sometimes employ His 4 lettered name is that at those times we are more perfect than at other times.

2. Should we think that the *Shechinah*, the manifestation of G'd

קלו א הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי-טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ:
ב הוֹדוּ לֵאלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ:
ג הוֹדוּ לַאֲדֹנֵי הָאֲדֹנִים כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ:
ד לְעֹשֵׂה נִפְלָאוֹת גְּדֹלוֹת לְבַדּוֹ כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ:

through which we receive His abundance, has received such abundance in turn from the ultimate source of *chessed*, kindness, i.e. the attribute of mercy, the Psalmist corrects us by stating that the ultimate source is *elokey ha-elokim*, and it is to Him we have to extend our thanks.

Since, however, a material world could not have come into existence without various layers of "heavens", could not have become the recipient of material blessings DIRECTLY from the ultimate cause of all existence, we must give thanks to both attributes.

3. If you would then assert that since the manifestation of G'd which we experience, i.e. the *Shechinah*, is a name for G'd's authority, i.e. *adnut*, why give THANKS to the aspect of G'd which also imparts some of its power to the *sarey umot ha-olam*, the spiritual counterparts of the nations of the universe, who have traditionally been our adversaries? The Psalmist answers that as long as Israel has not rid itself form the *zuhama*, pollution it had absorbed due to the sin in *Gan Eden*, – G'd needs this instrument to discipline us in order to encourage our repentance.

In other words, this *adnut*, authority, which G'd has shared to a very limited degree with the nations of the word, is also for our eternal welfare. (This is also the idea behind the 70 bulls which Israel used to sacrifice on the feast of tabernacles, and which represented the 70 nations. The concept is that each of those nations has a *sar*, spiritual counterpart which performs constructive functions.)

4. Even when there had not yet been any creature, – no universe that could have acknowledged Him – He did marvelous things all by Himself, creating the universe itself was an act of *chessed*, kindness, love.

Love, kindness, is usually conceived of as something reciprocal. In the case of G'd, it originated with Him, there was no expectation of reciprocity, ever. For this He is deserving our gratitude, i.e. *hodu*, etc.

5. Since the celestial regions do not depend on love, do not need acts of kindness, why did G'd create the angels etc.? He did so because He realized that these creatures were required for the sake of the creatures in the "lower" world, i.e. for the sake of mankind. WE

5Who made the heavens with wisdom, His steadfast love is eternal;
6Who spread the earth over the water, His steadfast love is eternal;
7Who made the great lights, His steadfast love is eternal;
8the sun to dominate the day, His steadfast love is eternal;
9the moon and the stars to dominate the night, His steadfast love is eternal;
10Who struck Egypt through their fist-born, His steadfast love is eternal;
11and brought Israel out of their midst, His steadfast love is eternal;
12with a strong hand and outstretched arm, His steadfast love is eternal;
13Who split apart the Sea of Reeds, His steadfast love is eternal;
14and made Israel pass through it, His steadfast love is eternal;

needed these beings to be interposed between us and G'd Himself, hence we need to thank Him for their existence.

6. Although the fact that the earth is above the level of the waters is unnatural, painful, seeing that earth is of heavier specific weight, and should have been beneath the waters, – do not be surprised, – He has done so in order to ensure the continued existence of the "lower" world, i.e. it is an act of kindness vis a vis mankind.

7. Should you find fault with G'd for having created 2 large light bodies, – which as the Midrash says could not co-exist until the moon had reduced itself in size – here too G'd had acted out of kindness, to reduce the fears induced by the dark of the night. (compare Chullin 60)

8. Should one believe that by allocating the day to the sun, G'd had re-inforced the jealousy between moon had sun, seeing that even BEFORE the sun had been given an advantage, the moon had been jealous of it, this too was an act of kindness, to teach the world how to bear insults; they should be like the sun, fulfilling their tasks daily without complaining.

9. The fact that the moon shares its domain with the stars, is not to be interpreted as a further demotion for the moon, in that it does

ה לְעֹשֵׂה הַשָּׁמַיִם בִּתְבוּנָה כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
ו לְרוֹקַע הָאָרֶץ עַל-הַמָּיִם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
ז לְעֹשֵׂה אוֹרִים גְּדֹלִים כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
ח אֶת-הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לְמֶמְשֶׁלֶת בַּיּוֹם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
ט אֶת-הַיָּרֵחַ וְכוֹכָבִים לְמֶמְשְׁלוֹת בַּלָּיְלָה כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
י לְמַכֵּה מִצְרַיִם בִּבְכוֹרֵיהֶם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
יא וַיּוֹצֵא יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
יב בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבִזְרוֹעַ נְטוּיָה כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
יג לְגֹזֵר יַם-סוּף לִגְזָרִים כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
יד וְהֶעֱבִיר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹכוֹ כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃

not even reign supreme at night. Our sages say that we may view the stars like an army under the command of the moon, who was compensated for having had to reduce itself in size. (Bereshit Rabbah 1)

10. Those who feel that to punish the first born for what the Egyptians generally had done to Israel, and especially to kill the children who had certainly been innocent, was an act of injustice by G'd, must remember that Israel was G'd's firstborn who had been tormented; hence it was the firstborn who bore the brunt of G'd's retribution. Only in this way would G'd's personal Providence become evident to mankind, a lesson to be learned by all of mankind, therefore an act of universal kindness. (*beni bechori Israel*, Exodus 4,22)

11. Though Israel had been inextricably part of the fabric of the Egyptian nation at that time, – G'd took them out, *goy mikerev goy*, separating a nation from parts of itself, – a special act of kindness. Since the world could not survive long without Israel, this too was an act of kindness *le-olam*, for the whole of the universe.

12. Since Israel had NOT been worthy of these manifestations of G'd's power against Egypt, why did G'd do so? Since Israel's continued stay in Egypt would have resulted in its permanent destruction (the 50th rung of defilement), this would have been followed by the demise of mankind. Hence G'd did mankind a favour by redeeming Israel with a strong hand, *yad hachazakah* etc., upsetting the normal course of events by direct Divine interference.

15Who hurled Pharaoh and his army into the Sea of Reeds, His steadfast love is eternal;
16Who led His people through the wilderness, His steadfast love is eternal;
17Who struck down great kings, His steadfast love is eternal;
18and slew mighty kings— His steadfast love is eternal;
19Sihon, king of the Amorites, His steadfast love is eternal;

13. Had G'd divided the sea into one piece, i.e. had Israel marched across side by side all together, this would have been adequate. Since our sages tell us that G'd created 12 separate channels, each separated by a wall of water, etc. – (Tanchuma Beshalach 10) this was all designed to teach mankind that G'd personally supervises His world. This lesson would help ensure mankind's ongoing existence.

14. On the verse (Micah 7,15) – "just like during the days when you went out of Egypt – I will show wonderful things", our Rabbis in Zohar *Lech Lecha* state that the reason the prophet used the word *be-tzetcha*, when you came out in the singular is that he referred to the patriarch Jacob, whose bier was carried across the sea together with the biers of his sons, to demonstrate the miracles G'd was performing for their descendants. The Psalmist, mentioning Israel, also refers to Israel = Jacob, the patriarch (as distinct from Israel the nation). Since there had been NO need to transport Jacob's bier through the sea, why did G'd do so? This was an act of kindness to ensure the world's survival. "When Israel crossed the sea (Exodus 14,29) and the waters stood as a wall on their right and on their left", the word *chomah* wall, is spelled defective, the letter *vav* being missing. (as distinct from Exodus 14,22)

We are told that the reason is so that it could be read *chemah*, anger. The sea was angry at having to act unnaturally on account of the Israelites. Had it not been for an act of kindness by G'd, – Israel would have drowned, and mankind would have forfeited its right to existence. So here too, G'd extended His kindness to the whole world. (compare Midrash Hagadol on Exodus 14,29, also Shemot Rabbah)

According to the view expressed in the Midrash that the Egyptians drowned already before Israel had reached the bank, – we also deal with an act of kindness of worldwide significance, since by witnessing all this, the knowledge of how G'd could simultaneously

טו וְנִעֵר פַּרְעֹה וְחֵילוֹ בְיַם-סוּף כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
טז לְמוֹלִיךְ עַמּוֹ בַּמִּדְבָּר כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
יז לְמַכֵּה מְלָכִים גְּדֹלִים כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
יח וַיַּהֲרֹג מְלָכִים אַדִּירִים כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
יט לְסִיחוֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֱמֹרִי כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃

execute justice and practice mercy became deeply embedded in the minds of Israel.

15. Although G'd could have let the Egyptians drown gradually, without "flinging them into the sea", He did so in order that both Pharaoh and Israel would realize that all had been due to G'd's PERSONAL involvement, not to forces of nature. This too made all the survivors aware that G'd preserves His universe, a kindness of global dimensions, i.e. *le-olam chassdo*.

16. Had G'd led the Israelites through occupied countries, they might have come to regret leaving Egypt, seeing that they were constantly in danger from other nations. It was an act of kindness then, one that assured Israel's future existence, to make them travel through the desert.

17. Why does the Psalmist use both the adjectives *gedolim*, great and *adirim* mighty, when describing the kings that He defeated (verse 18)?

Also, why are Sichon and Og separate verses (19 and 20) and are not lumped together in one verse as in 135,12?

In verse 21 we read that G'd gave Israel Sichon and Og's lands as an inheritance. Why does verse 2 have to repeat the same facts? Why is Israel suddenly described as "his servant" instead of as "His people", as in Psalms 135,12? Our sages say that the defeat of the kings of Sichon and Og was the beginning of the defeat of the kings of Midian and the kings of Canaan, which had caused Balak to say that if those 2 mighty kinds had been unable to prevail against Israel, what chance did he, Balak, have to prevail against them! (Midrash Hagadol Numbers 22,1)

18. Therefore, the *melachim adirim*, mighty kings mentioned in verse 18 are the 31 kings of the land of Israel (of whom our sages say that they comprised all civilized countries at the time, and each of whom had staked a claim to part of the land of Canaan). This is why these kings are described as *adirim*, mighty. (compare Bereshit Rabbah Vayera)

19. The *melachim gedolim* is a reference to Sichon and Og.

20*Og, king of Bashan— His steadfast love is eternal;*
21*and gave their land as a heritage, His steadfast love is eternal;*
22*a heritage to His servant Israel, His steadfast love is eternal;*
23*Who took note of us in our degradation, His steadfast love is eternal;*
24*and rescued us from our enemies, His steadfast love is eternal;*
25*Who gives food to all flesh, His steadfast love is eternal;*
26*Praise the God of heaven, His steadfast love is eternal.*

20. Og is mentioned separately, since both Sichon and Og individually possessed enough power and reputation to induce fear even amongst the *melachim adirim*, the mighty kings.

21. Even though the lands of Sichon and Og did not constitute the principal heritage of the Jewish people, their lands were accounted part of the heritage of Israel.

22. The remainder of *Eretz Yisrael*, i.e. the West Bank, became Israel's true heritage, i.e. in those parts the rule that the "dead inherited the living" applied. (compare Baba Batra 117).

The land was divided according to the tribes going back to Jacob and his family.

Through G'd fulfilling His promise to the patriarchs that their descendants would inherit the land of Canaan, He made the people the recipient of His abundance, and the gentile nations benefit from this indirectly. Therefore, *ki le-olam chassdo*, His loving kindness extends to the entire world.

23. It is well known that at the time of the Exodus, the Israelites left at a time which was most inauspicious for them from a horoscopic point of view. Pharaoh had already pointed this out in Exodus 10,10. (compare Rashi and Yalkut Shimoni on Ki Tissa 392)

Accordingly, when they entered the land of Canaan, they should have been killed, but G'd converted the bloodshed that was forecast for them into the blood of circumcision when Joshua performed mass circumcision on all the males who had been born since the Exodus. (Joshua 5,3–8). The verse "today I have removed the shame of Egypt from you", (Joshua 5,9) is a reference to the fact that this potentially disastrous constellation had been overhanging them since the Exodus, and had only now been neutralized. The Psalmist

כ וּלְעוֹג מֶלֶךְ הַבָּשָׁן כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
כא וְנָתַן אַרְצָם לְנַחֲלָה כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
כב נַחֲלָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדּוֹ כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
כג שֶׁבְּשִׁפְלֵנוּ זָכַר לָנוּ כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
כד וַיִּפְרְקֵנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
כה נֹתֵן לֶחֶם לְכָל-בָּשָׂר כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃
כו הוֹדוּ לְאֵל הַשָּׁמָיִם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ׃

therefore refers to the period when Israel, though exposed to the influence of this constellation had been saved by the kindness of G'd.

24. A further reference to the fact that G'd freed us from impending disaster by accepting the blood of circumcision in its place. Again, as always, since survival of Israel is the key to the survival of mankind itself, we can speak about G'd's kindness extending to the entire world.

25. After Joshua had circumcised the people they were short of bread, seeing that the last stores of Manna had been exhausted, no Manna having fallen since the day Moses had died on the 7th of Adar, and the circumcision having taken place more than a month later. (compare Kidushin 30) The Israelites were not reported to have eaten from the produce of Eretz Yisrael until the day after the Passover, the 16th of Nissan i.e. 40 days after the death of Moses. (Joshua 5,12)

The Manna, which normally did not keep beyond the day on which it had been collected, had kept well for 40 days (both qualitatively and quantitatively apparently). Again, survival of Israel resulted in the survival of the gentile nations, i.e. G'd's kindness to Israel is an act of kindness for the entire universe.

26. Having brought Israel to the holy land, and establishing His Presence amongst them in the temple, the statement by our sages that G'd had desired to make His major residence in our world since the time He had created the universe, had now come true... Mankind now learned to appreciate the value of G'd's Presence on earth, and by implication the value G'd places on man seeing that though He has the angels in heaven, He prefers to make His abode amongst man.

When we thank G'd who is the G'd of heaven, we state that the kindness G'd extends to the world of the angels is only because their world is the source of abundance He bestows on our world. Even when Israel fulfils G'd's commandments and is not in need of acts of *chessed*, kindness, G'd extends His kindness for the sake of mankind.

137 *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat, sat and wept, as we thought of Zion.*
2There on the poplars we hung up our lyres,
3for our captors asked us there for songs, our tormentors, for amusement, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion."
4How can we sing a song of the LORD on alien soil?

Psalm 137

1. The Psalmist, by making the hymn of *al naharot bavel*, on the banks of the streams of Babylonia, the hymn following the *hallel hagadol*, indicates that if Israel will merit it, it will be able to recite the former, if it will not merit it, it will have to recite this Psalm, lamenting what could have been and what should have been.

We need to understand why the Psalmist has chosen the location of *neharot*, streams as the setting for this Psalm. Our sages (Yalkut Shimoni on this chapter based on Lamentations 5,5) have taught us that when Israel was led into Babylonian captivity, their captors did not permit them either to sit down or cry all along the long route. We can say therefore that the captives had finally achieved 2 objectives at the rivers of Babylonia. 1)They were allowed to sit down and rest. 2)They were allowed to weep, to lament their fate. This is why the Psalmist says "there we sat" and "there we wept". The word *gam*, also needs an explanation. Besides, why do we need to be told that they hung their harps on willow trees (verse 2)? Would it not have been more appropriate to destroy their musical instruments altogether? After all, Pessikta Rabbah 32,4 mentions that the musicians cut off their thumbs in order not to have to play their instruments for the Babylonians!

The word *ki* at the beginning of verse 3 is also puzzling, since it does not seem to introduce the reason for what follows.

Why is the word *shir* song, repeated in verse 3; why not simply *shiru lanu* sing for us, without the prior *divrey shir*, the words of the song?

We are told in the Zohar that the exiles in Babylonia were death like, like zombies, having been brought from a life of great comfort to the depths of deprivation. They refused to accept any attempts to comfort them, to offer them consolation.

This is why G'd revealed visions to the prophet Ezekiel on the river Kevar = Euphrates, – showing him G'd and His entourage, in order to convince the exiled Israelites that they had not been abandoned by the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence), that in fact the *Shechinah* was also exiled alongside them, as well as the angels. These acted as

קלז א עַל-נַהֲרוֹת בָּבֶל שָׁם יָשַׁבְנוּ גַּם-בָּכִינוּ בְּזָכְרֵנוּ אֶת-
צִיּוֹן:
ב עַל-עֲרָבִים בְּתוֹכָהּ תָּלִינוּ כִּנֹּרוֹתֵינוּ:
ג כִּי שָׁם שְׁאֵלוּנוּ שׁוֹבֵינוּ דִּבְרֵי-שִׁיר וְתוֹלָלֵינוּ שִׂמְחָה
שִׁירוּ לָנוּ מִשִּׁיר צִיּוֹן:
ד אֵיךְ נָשִׁיר אֶת-שִׁיר-יְהוָה עַל אַדְמַת נֵכָר:

guarantors i.e. *aravim* that He who would free the angels would also free the Jewish exiles in due course. When Israel heard all this, it began to regain its composure. This is the background against which we read that the Israelites "sat alongside the rivers of Babylonia", i.e. there they experienced some degree of relief having been told of Ezekiel's vision. (compare Ezekiel 1) On the one hand they rejoiced, – but on the other hand *bachinu*, we cried, when they thought back to Zion.

2. In view of the bitter experience of exile, especially prior to the revelations experienced by Ezekiel, there would have been ample reason to destroy their harps since they had nothing to be happy about. After the news of Ezekiel's visions, and the guarantees of their future redemption, they hung the harps on *aravim*, i.e. the kind of trees whose very name has the dual meaning of "guarantors" and willows. This is why they did not hang them on any other kind of tree. The reason they did not destroy their musical instruments altogether was so that they would be able to play those instruments once the time for redemption would arrive...

3. Now the Psalmist tells us that what had stirred up the memories of the exiles more than the thought of the holy ark and the sanctuary, had been the request by their captors to sing songs of Zion. The words of these songs caused them to break out and weep. It triggered more memories than anything else had done. The word *ki* then is a reference to why they started crying. As long as the captors had not noted some improvement in the mental state of the exiles, they had requested only *divrey shir*, to hear the lyrics of those songs of Zion. Only after the spirit of the Jewish exiles had lifted, after having heard Ezekiel's visions, did they request a musical rendition of these sons. Possibly, the lyrics referred to are the text of the daily hymns that had been sung in the sanctuary at the time the sacrificial service was in progress.

When the Babylonians saw that the harps had merely been hung

5If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither;
6let my tongue stick to my palate if I cease to think of you, if I do not keep Jerusalem in memory even at my happiest hour.
7Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem's fall; how they cried, "Strip her, strip her to her very foundations!"
8Fair Babylon, you predator, a blessing on him who repays you in kind what you have inflicted on us;

up, not destroyed, they felt that there was a chance to also hear the melodies belonging to those lyrics.

4. Being unable to deny that some measure of joy had come back into their lives, – the exiles explained their refusal to play these songs by describing the songs of "Zion" as "songs of the Lord", i.e. something sacred, which could not be sung on impure soil.

5. The holy spirit addresses Jerusalem, to assuage its feelings by saying "do you not know, are you not aware that Zion IS being remembered and WEPT OVER?" – "Surely, you know that forgetting you would be equivalent to My right hand, i.e. the source of love, forgetting you"?

This is so impossible that such an eventuality need not even be considered! The proof that G'd's attribute of love, *midat hachessed* is the subject here and not Jerusalem, is, that the letter *shin* in *tishkach* has a *sheva* tone sign and not a *patach* under it. (if it had a *patach*, the meaning would be passive, i.e. "she will be forgotten".)

6. Certainly, there can be no question of My forgetting you, on the contrary, know that when the time for redemption approaches, you will be the first that will be remembered (publicly). However, the timing itself is a secret, as G'd has said (Isaiah 6,4) "for the day of revenge is in My heart", meaning that G'd has not revealed it to anyone. Since G'd has not revealed it, no one knows when it will occur, as the popular expression *liba lepuma lo gali, puma le-mi gali*? if the heart has not told the mouth, how can the mouth tell anyone?

The redemption will come when it will be revealed. Hence, know "my tongue will stick to the roof of my mouth", so as not to reveal it – before mentioning you" (Jerusalem).

Not only this, in the future G'd will take delight in His accomplishments, something He has not done thus far, except in the building of the temple.

When we consider that the meaning of the term "joy" when applied to celestial beings is the release of internally stored

ה אִם-אֶשְׁכָּחֵךְ יְרוּשָׁלָם תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי:
ו תִּדְבַּק לְשׁוֹנִי לְחִכִּי אִם-לֹא אֶזְכְּרֵכִי אִם-לֹא אַעֲלֶה
אֶת-יְרוּשָׁלַם עַל רֹאשׁ שִׂמְחָתִי:
ז זְכֹר יְהוָה לִבְנֵי אֱדוֹם אֵת יוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם הָאֹמְרִים עָרוּ
עָרוּ עַד הַיְסוֹד בָּהּ:
ח בַּת-בָּבֶל הַשְּׁדוּדָה אַשְׁרֵי שֶׁיְּשַׁלֶּם-לָךְ אֶת-גְּמוּלֵךְ
שֶׁגָּמַלְתְּ לָנוּ:

abundance, parallel to the release of joyful feelings in human beings is the release of "light", radiance. What G'd is saying then is that *rosh simchati*, the principal expression of My joy will be the rebuilding of the sanctuary. At the time of the redemption, G'd pronounces *a-aleh*, i.e. I will improve on the previous temple when I give expression to My joy and build the temple of the future. Jerusalem at that time will be qualitatively on a higher level than the temple of old had been.

7. After G'd has assured Israel of His liking for Jerusalem, Israel says to G'd "since this is so, remember to pay back the Romans whose treatment of Jerusalem had been even worse than that of the Babylonians, since *aru aru ad ha-yessod* they had given orders to strip Jerusalem down to its very foundations.

8. Once G'd notes that Israel is more concerned about Jerusalem than about its own distress, He, in turn assumes the role of identifying with Israel, and proclaims that he who will pay back Babylonia for what it has done to "us", meaning the Jewish people, is praiseworthy.

The same G'd who had once described Nebuchadnezzar as "My servant" (Jeremiah 25,9), – reverses Himself by saying that He will bring retribution not only on Nebuchadnezzar and his people, but on all the other nations who at one time or another had plundered Jerusalem (Jeremiah 25,12–14) (see also Isaiah 14, 13–23).

The Zohar, commenting on Zechariah 14,12, where we read that G'd will pay back all those who *tzavu al yerushalayim*, had made war on Jerusalem at any time (not only the occasions discussed in that chapter) states, that those people will be re-incarnated at the time discussed in that chapter, in order for G'd to take His revenge on them. Were it not so, it would hardly be sufficient that only the grandchildren should be punished while the perpetrators themselves died a peaceful death.

9a blessing on him who seizes your babies and dashes them against the rocks!

138 *Of David.*
I praise You with all my heart, sing a hymn to You before the divine beings;
2I bow toward Your holy temple and praise Your name for Your steadfast love and faithfulness, because You have exalted Your name, Your word, above all.
3When I called, You answered me, You inspired me with courage.
4All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O LORD, for they have heard the words You spoke.
5They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, "Great is the majesty of the LORD!"
6High though the LORD is, He sees the lowly; lofty, He perceives from afar.

9. Since the Babylonians and Romans had cruelly murdered Jewish children, the Psalmist assures Jerusalem that those who will do likewise to the children of the oppressors of the Jewish people will receive honorary mention i.e. *ashrey*, from G'd.

Psalm 138

1. This Psalm revolves around two points. First, it describes the advantage of the temple to other houses and locations of prayer. Second, David explains that if one's prayer is answered silently, i.e. without G'd telling the petitioner that He has accepted his prayer, this is an inferior way of having one's prayer answered.

He commences with the first premise, and later refers to the second premise, which he considers as an outgrowth of the first premise.

"When I thank the Lord with my whole heart, i.e. when both my urges are united within me, acknowledging what G'd has done for me, I would find myself in the presence of the Lord wherever I am".

2. What then is the advantage of the temple over other sites of prayer? "I can prostrate myself in Your holy sanctuary, which adds an additional dimension to my prayer, since I can immediately acknowledge the fact that You have responded to my prayer by indicating this. Not only this, the very holiness of the temple causes me to become the recipient of *ruach hakodesh*, holy inspiration.

ס אַשְׁרֵי שֶׁיֹּאחֵז וְנִפֵּץ אֶת-עֹלָלַיִךְ אֶל-הַסָּלַע:

קלח

א לְדָוִד אוֹדְךָ בְכָל-לִבִּי נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים אֲזַמְּרֶךָּ:
ב אֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶל-הֵיכַל קָדְשְׁךָ וְאוֹדֶה אֶת-שִׁמְךָ עַל-
חַסְדְּךָ וְעַל-אֲמִתֶּךָ כִּי-הִגְדַּלְתָּ עַל-כָּל-שִׁמְךָ אִמְרָתֶךָ:
ג בְּיוֹם קָרָאתִי וַתַּעֲנֵנִי תַּרְהִבֵנִי בְנַפְשִׁי עֹז:
ד יוֹדוּךָ יְהוָה כָּל-מַלְכֵי-אֶרֶץ כִּי-שָׁמְעוּ אִמְרֵי-פִיךָ:
ה וְיָשִׁירוּ בִּדְרָכֵי יְהוָה כִּי גָדוֹל כְּבוֹד יְהוָה:
ו כִּי-רָם יְהוָה וְשָׁפָל יִרְאֶה וְגָבוֹהַּ מִמֶּרְחָק יְיֵדָע:

3. Should one argue that since the petitioner trusts in G'd without reservation, what advantage is there in being TOLD that one's prayer has been answered? – David says, "my answer is that on the day that I call on You and You answer me, my soul gains additional strength. Even my body derives additional holiness, i.e. *tarhiveyni*, You embolden me.

4. The reason I am so jubilant is that through Your having communicated with me directly, You have elevated me above all the other kings on earth, none of whom can boast that G'd has spoken to them as You have to me".

For surely, had You done so, they would give thanks to You for having allowed them to hear Your words.

5. All they have accomplished, is to learn to appreciate that You control the universe and man's fate by Your personal supervision of it.

6. Having observed *hashgacha*, G'd's supervision in action, they realize that though G'd is exalted, *ram*, in the heavens, He nevertheless concerns Himself with the *shefel yireh*, what goes on in our material world.

Even though He is high above even the worlds of angels, i.e. *gavo-ah*, He is even further from earth. Nonetheless, He knows what will happen in the distant future, i.e. *mimerchak*. The Psalmist uses the word *yeda* (a most unusual hiphil construction,) instead of the normal hiphil *yodia*, for indicating that G'd communicates with the prophet concerning events in the distant future. The reason he chose this grammatical form is to make us understand that the prophet receives such communication via an angel.

7Though I walk among enemies, You preserve me in the face of my foes; You extend Your hand; with Your right hand You deliver me.
8The LORD will settle accounts for me.
O LORD, Your steadfast love is eternal; do not forsake the work of Your hands.

139 *For the leader. Of David. A psalm.*
O LORD, You have examined me and know me.
2When I sit down or stand up You know it; You discern my thoughts from afar.

7. These kings also recognize G'd's personal guidance of my fate, when they observe how G'd has saved me from my troubles in Gat, – when He led me to the palace of King Achish. Although the king had been informed that David had killed his brother Goliath, and the king should have acted as Goliath's blood avenger, who would have thought that David could be saved??

In addition, David was hotly pursued by Saul at the time, was not trusted by the servants of Achish, and yet released unharmed!! All this was proof of how G'd had saved David.

8. David, who views himself as the re-incarnation of Adam, first man, hopes that the temple will be completed in his lifetime, since it is his purpose to rectify what his ancestor Adam had ruined through his sin in *gan eden*. The temple would enable him to elevate himself so that he could feel that he had successfully completed his mission on earth. The *oz*, strength that G'd would then give his soul, (compare verse 3) would restore his soul, which had been weakened through Adam's sin.

David is confident of achieving this, since the prophet Nathan had said to him "*kissacha yihyeh nachon ad olam*", "your throne will be firm forever". (Samuel II 7,16).

If You, O G'd will not let me finish building the temple, in Your loving kindness, *chassdecha*, how can this prophecy be fulfilled?

Besides, David says, do not weaken Your handiworks, i.e. the *mikdash Hashem* of which the Torah says "You have established them firmly" (Exodus 15,17). When the Torah spoke about *ma-aasey yadecha* plural, it referred to mankind as well as the temple being G'd's handiworks.

Psalm 139

1. All our sages agree that this Psalm refers to Adam, and we are

ז אִם-אֵלֵךְ בְּקֶרֶב צָרָה תְּחַיֵּנִי עַל אַף אֹיְבַי תִּשְׁלַח יָדֶךָ
וְתוֹשִׁיעֵנִי יְמִינֶךָ:
ח יְהוָה יִגְמֹר בַּעֲדִי יְהוָה חַסְדְּךָ לְעוֹלָם מַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ
אַל-תֶּרֶף:

קלט

א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר יְהוָה חֲקַרְתַּנִי וַתֵּדָע:
ב אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ שִׁבְתִּי וְקוּמִי בַּנְתָּה לְרֵעִי מֵרָחוֹק:

certainly not going to pursue a different path in our commentary than that trodden by our luminaries who have handed down to us the tradition that David was Adam re-incarnated.

The Psalm continues ideas and thoughts expressed in the last hymn.

Besides, Bereshit Rabbah 24, states that Adam complained to G'd that He had known that Adam would sin and that death would be decreed for him, and that he would survive only inasmuch as the human species survives until the time of resurrection would arrive. Our sages prove this from statements in the Midrash that the concept of death was thought of by G'd long before Adam ever sinned (compare Pessachim 54, "7 things were created prior to the universe")

Since David had asked G'd at the end of the last Psalm "do not let the works of Your hands weaken", and he had then referred to Adam, the Psalmist now comes to speak well of Adam as if he were speaking of himself in defence of Adam. David's argument is, that *chakartani*, after all You had examined me, You had foreknowledge of events before You gathered the soil to create me. Hence You knew what would develop and what would be decreed over me, i.e. *vateyda*, you knew ALL I WAS GOING TO DO.

2. Not only that, but You also knew what I would do when I sat down and got up, i.e. *shivti vekumi*, You divined (understood, from *Binah*) who would eventually be my companion – many years prior to the event, i.e. *merachok*.

Our sages tell us that as long as Eve was in Adam's company the serpent did not dare approach her. Only when G'd had taken Adam to wander across the earth in order to decide which areas were suitable for human habitation, did the serpent seize the opportunity to seduce Eve.

This may have prompted Adam to say to G'd "if You had not

3You observe my walking and reclining, and are familiar with all my ways.
4There is not a word on my tongue but that You, O LORD, know it well.
5You hedge me before and behind; You lay Your hand upon me.
6It is beyond my knowledge; it is a mystery; I cannot fathom it.
7Where can I escape from Your spirit?
Where can I flee from Your presence?

separated me from my wife, – I would not have sinned. (This may be the *alilah*, accusation that the sages had been speaking of). Why then did You select the point in time to let me select sites for human habitation on earth?, i.e. *kumi*, I had to get up? As long as I sat *shivti* in *gan Eden* I was safe from sin.

A further argument was that "You understood already *merachok*, that my eventual companion would be the *melech hamashiah*, the Messiah". Both the Targum and Rashi understand the word *ray-i* here as companion, someone to bring close. Since the Messiah will appear only at the end of time, he can be MY companion, i.e. my soul mate only if You have decreed this already prior to my sin, i.e. that he would rectify the damage I have caused through my sin.

David (Adam) asks G'd "if You had not wanted me to die, why did You arrange for an antidote to the angel of death i.e. my reincarnation in the guise of the Messiah?

The statement by our sages that G'd indirectly reproached Adam even before He created him, is to be understood in a similar vein. It means that the very fact G'd created the angel of death and the Messiah prior to creating Adam indicated that He had no confidence in Adam's obedience.

Those who understand the word *rey-i* as related to *ra-ayon*, a thought, an idea, will read David's statement as "You have divined all my thoughts from time immemorial", i.e. in advance, long before I sinned.

3. Another proof that You had planned originally to maintain the species, – is the fact that when You first created me, man and woman as one body, 2 faces on a single body, I was unable to procreate, i.e. to live a "normal" life, *orchi*. Neither could the woman be impregnated *riv-i*. You had to *zerita*, to make *zarim* separate bodies out of us in order for us to ensure the continuation of the species.

ג אָרְחִי וְרִבְעִי זֵרִיתָ וְכָל-דְּרָכַי הִסְכַּנְתָּה׃
ד כִּי אֵין מִלָּה בִּלְשׁוֹנִי הֵן יְהוָה יָדַעְתָּ כֻלָּהּ׃
ה אָחוֹר וָקֶדֶם צַרְתָּנִי וַתָּשֶׁת עָלַי כַּפֶּכָה׃
ו פְּלִאָיָה דַּעַת מִמֶּנִּי נִשְׂגְּבָה לֹא-אוּכַל לָהּ׃
ז אָנָה אֵלֵךְ מֵרוּחֶךָ וְאָנָה מִפָּנֶיךָ אֶבְרָח׃

Had death NOT been decreed, there would have been no need to ensure the survival of the species through the mating of man and wife. Similarly, my entire body with all its orifices is constructed on the assumption that death is a natural part of life.

Moses already had been commanded to meet Pharaoh at the river, where the latter used to answer calls of nature. This was because G'd wanted Pharaoh to know that his claim to be a deity could easily be disproven when there was a witness to the fact that Pharaoh – like ordinary mortals – had to urinate and to excrete. (compare Exodus 7,15, Shemot Rabbah quoted by Rashi).

4. Further proof is the fact that You know even the words my tongue has not yet uttered.

5. Besides, since You have equated my rear and my front (since You created me with 2 faces, one facing forward the other to the rear) indicating they were of equal importance, why was the penalty decreed on me, more than on her?

6. If the reason is that I am more intelligent than she (Eve), I find that she has more profound insights than I have, i.e. *peliah daat mimeni.* This conforms to the statement of our sages on Genesis 2,22, that *vayiven* means "He gave *Binah*", understanding, insight to the woman. (Nidah 45)

Not only this, Eve persuaded Adam by a superior argument, i.e. *nisgevah*, to eat from the tree of knowledge by saying "do you think I will die and G'd will create another mate for you? Are you not aware that nothing new will be created under the sun?" (compare Ecclesiast. 1,9) Why then did You punish ME more than her?

7. To understand this verse, we must first understand Genesis 3,8 "*vayitchabe ha-adam ve-ishto*", "and man and his wife hid". (the word "hid" is in singular). Why does the Torah not use the plural for the verb, i.e. "they hid", *vayitchab-u*?

The Torah indicates that Adam took the initiative in hiding from the voice of G'd, that Eve joined him afterwards. We also explained in our commentary on the Torah why they hid in the tree of knowledge. Prior to the sin they had not experienced difficulty in

8If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I descend to Sheol, *You are there too.*
9If I take wing with the dawn to come to rest on the western horizon,
10even there Your hand will be guiding me, Your right hand will be holding me fast.
11If I say, "Surely darkness will conceal me, night will provide me with cover,
12darkness is not dark for You; night is as light as day; darkness and light are the same.
13It was You who created my conscience; You fashioned me in my mother's womb.

hearing the voice of G'd. Now this had become very painful. This was because their whole stature had been reduced and they were no longer primed to hear G'd speak to them. They went to the tree of knowledge, believing it to be more compatible with their new reduced stature since it contained not only knowledge of good, but also knowledge of evil. In other words, the tree itself was a mixture of the pure and the impure. Adam and Even thought that there the voice of G'd would be received in a diluted, clouded form, and that they would be able to tolerate it in their new condition.

Adam is suggesting here that G'd might have punished him more harshly than Eve on account of his having taken the initiative in hiding from G'd's voice. He explains therefore: "what was I to do"? *anna eylech*?, where else could I have gone?

I had to flee Your Presence, seeing that I could not tolerate Your voice.

8. If I were to ascend to heaven, i.e. the world of the galaxies, a material world devoid of spiritual forces, unlike *gan Eden*, – and Your voice there would also be more tangible, this is no longer so, since You have withdrawn to that world due to my sin. (Bereshit Rabbah 19,13)

If, on the other hand, I make my bed, i.e. *atziah* in the nether world, there too, due to the negative forces that abound in that world, Your voice would be sufficiently diluted for me to be able to stand it.

9. In view of these considerations, I decided that I would rather hide in the tree of knowledge, a place where the Presence of G'd lingers, since the tree contains *tov* as well as *ra*, rather than to hide in a place completely devoid of *tov*, i.e. spiritual values.

Kanfey shachar is a metaphor for the "wings of the Divine Presence, the *Shechinah*" which is also known as *yam. Acharit yam*

ח אִם-אֶסַּק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אָתָּה וְאַצִּיעָה שְׁאוֹל הִנֶּךָּ:
ט אֶשָּׂא כַנְפֵי-שָׁחַר אֶשְׁכְּנָה בְּאַחֲרִית יָם:
י גַּם-שָׁם יָדְךָ תַנְחֵנִי וְתֹאחֲזֵנִי יְמִינֶךָ:
יא וָאֹמַר אַךְ-חֹשֶׁךְ יְשׁוּפֵנִי וְלַיְלָה אוֹר בַּעֲדֵנִי:
יב גַּם-חֹשֶׁךְ לֹא-יַחְשִׁיךְ מִמֶּךָּ וְלַיְלָה כַּיּוֹם יָאִיר
כַּחֲשֵׁיכָה כָּאוֹרָהּ:
יג כִּי-אַתָּה קָנִיתָ כִלְיֹתָי תְּסֻכֵּנִי בְּבֶטֶן אִמִּי:

is the tail end of the *Shechinah*, the periphery of the expanse covered by such Divine Presence. In this fashion, Adam says, that by hiding in the tree of knowledge, I will at least not enter a domain governed completely by *ra*, evil, negative forces.

10. Also, my motivation for hiding in the tree of knowledge was that there You may guide me, i.e. take hold of my right hand to lead me to holiness.

11. I have not despaired of Your mercy, – since I have seen how considerate You have been of me. After I sinned on Friday, (the 6th day of creation) and You had decreed that the serpent would forever be my enemy so that my heel would have to bruise its head in order for me to survive, (Genesis 3,15) I was afraid that when night would fall and the negative forces (i.e. the serpent) would abound, they would hurt me. Then I saw that the night had been transformed into light for me. (Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer) (During the night of Friday to Sabbath the forces of evil did not abound). Our sages say that from Friday sunrise till the end of the Sabbath, i.e. 36 hours, the sun did not set. I am convinced that this happened for my sake, i.e. *ba-a-deyni*. (compare Bereshit Rabbah 11,2)

12. G'd did not accomplish this by merely increasing the power of the sun's light on Friday night in order to neutralize the darkness of night, but He cancelled the darkness, so that the night was as bright as day. This surely was done by You, i.e. *mimeka*, because of Your love for me, so that darkness should not bruise me, something I do not fear by day.

13. On the verse (Job 29,3) *behilo neyro aley roshi*, when His light illuminated my head, *le-ora eylech choshech*, I could walk in the dark (physical darkness) with the help of His light, our sages comment both on this verse and the following verse 4 *besod eloka aley oholi* in Nidah 30.

Rabbi Simlai said "to what may a foetus inside the mother's womb

> [14]*I praise You, for I am awesomely, wondrously made; Your work is wonderful; I know it very well.*
> [15]*My frame was not concealed from You when I was shaped in a hidden place, knit together in the recesses of the earth.*
> [16]*Your eyes saw my unformed limbs; they were all recorded in Your book; in due time they were formed, to the very last one of them.*

be compared? To a ledger which is folded, lying quietly, its hands at its sides, etc... once it comes into the world however, its openings close and its closed parts open since it could not survive otherwise. A light is shining over its head and looks out for it from one end of the earth to the other". This is what is meant in our verses Job 29,3–4. While in the mother's womb, the embryo is taught the entire Torah as is stated in Proverbs 4,4 "He taught me and said to me may My words make your heart strong, observe My commandments". In Job 29,4 we also read "while G'd;s secrets are still in my tent, i.e. while I was in the womb of my mother".

Once the baby leaves the womb, an angel strikes him and he forgets what he has been taught, (Nidah 30) as it says (Genesis 4,7) "*lephetach chatat rovetz*, sin lies in wait at the entrance".

David says that so far he had spoken about Adam, who was "my first *nefesh*", i.e. my original life on earth. Though I accused You G'd that You had prepared my downfall already prior to my creation, – I must give praise that You have returned to Adam in mercy, as mentioned earlier.

Now I have to praise You for the good You have done for me in re-incarnating his soul in my body; thereby You have acquired my kidneys – (compare Job 38,36) "who has put wisdom in the inward part?" David says that G'd has so filled his kidneys with wisdom that He has acquired his entire spirituality "when You covered me in my mother's womb". In other words, while there, You taught me the entire Torah. Stated differently, "I was surrounded by Your spiritual light while in my mother's womb".

14. I give thanks to You for another matter. Your actions have been marvellous for me, when, while in my mother's womb thanks to the light shining above my head, I was able to see from one end of the earth to the other, i.e. I have seen all Your works, *ma-assecha*.

Should one question how David could be grateful for Torah insights which he had already forgotten by the time he was born?, David replies that it is only his body which has forgotten, not his soul;

יד אוֹדְךָ עַל כִּי נוֹרָאוֹת נִפְלֵיתִי נִפְלָאִים מַעֲשֶׂיךָ
וְנַפְשִׁי יֹדַעַת מְאֹד:
טו לֹא-נִכְחַד עָצְמִי מִמְּךָ אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתִי בַסֵּתֶר רֻקַּמְתִּי
בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת אָרֶץ:
טז גָּלְמִי רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ וְעַל-סִפְרְךָ כֻּלָּם יִכָּתֵבוּ יָמִים יֻצָּרוּ
וְלֹא אֶחָד בָּהֶם:

nafshi yoda-at me-od, my soul remains very much aware. Through my diligent study, the knowledge that is my soul's can gradually be absorbed by my heart and body.

15. All comentators are agreed that *atzmi* refers to his body. Since it is difficult for man to comprehend that G'd's personal guidance extends even to the foetus within the mother's womb, David says that G'd's *hashgachah*, personal supervision, extends even further than THAT. On the verse (Numbers 23,10) "who has counted the dust of Jacob, and the number of couplings (matings) in Israel"?, Rabbi Abahu in Nidah 31 explains that G'd awaits the germination of the drop of semen which will eventually turn into a *tzaddik*, righteous person. (In our parlance, G'd supervises the genetic compatibility of male and female sperm).

Bileam's one eye was blinded since he said that only a person who is pure and whose servants are pure shall be able to observe this, and he, though impure wanted to view this.

What David is saying is, that there is no need to mention as is written in Job that G'd's light shines for the child already born, He does so already at the time of its conception. The meaning of *atzmi* then is *otzem = koach*, strength, since the drop of semen is what represents the strength of the body.

Your supervision takes place both *usseyti baseter*, when I was conceived in privacy – as well when *rukamti*, when my tissue was already firmly structured, yet completely passive.

16. We read in Shemot Rabbah that at the time Adam was a *golem*, and filled the whole world, i.e. he was of extraordinary large physical dimension, G'd paraded before him every human body ever to be born, passing these images before the various parts of his body. This is the meaning of *golmi*, i.e. every *golem* I will ever make, *ra-u eynecha*, your eyes have seen.

This is why G'd challenged Job's criticism of Him by asking him (Job 38,4) "where were you when I founded the earth"?, i.e. I had not

17How weighty Your thoughts seem to me, O God, how great their number!
18I count them—they exceed the grains of sand; I end—but am still with You.

taken YOU into my confidence, hence *haged im yadata binah*, pray tell if you have really have such insight

David states here *ve-al siferecha kulam yikateyvu*, all these people yet to be born have already been recorded in Your book, i.e. the book of which the Amora Samuel said that he had been shown the book of Adam in which it is recorded that he (Samuel) would be called physician, (but not Rabbi). (Baba Metzia 85)

Samuel had understood that this *sefer ha-adam* contains information not only about who will be born, but also about the fate of such people. (compare Bereshit Rabbah 24,2 *dor, dor ve-dorshav*)

David is grateful to G'd who had foreseen that he would be stillborn, i.e. *golmi*, seeing that all the bodies that could potentially descend fro Adam had been recorded. *Kulam yikateyvu yamim yutzaru*, i.e. all those who would be FORMED during *yamim* the 6000 years of mankind's history. The word *yamim* is a reference to the 6 days of creation, each day being 1000 years in G'd's timetable. (Psalms 90,4)

In Exodus 31,17, we do NOT read "for G'd created the heaven and the earth DURING 6 days", i.e. *besheshet yamim*, but we read "G'd created heaven and earth 6 days", *sheyshet yamim, yamim yutzaru*. This indicates that G'd created these "days" as part of heaven and earth, i.e. *yamim yutzaru*, these days had been created. We need to understand why the Torah does not speak of G'd as having created 7 days, After all, He also created the Sabbath!?

However, the reason the Torah speaks only about G'd having created 6 days is, because the creation of those days involved also giving those days the potential of being days in G'd's calendar, i.e. 1000 years for each day (as we quoted from Psalm 90,4). Since the 7th millenium is supposed to be one during which the physical universe will be destroyed, the Torah could not refer to G'd having created 7 days in that context i.e. the potential of a 7th millennium. (compare Sanhedrin 97, Bet Hamedrash, Yalinek 3,19)

David, in our verse, refers to those days, concerning which entries have been made in *sifrecha* Your book, the book in which all the *golmim* Adam had been shown were recorded, i.e. the book recording 6000 years of human history.

What G'd had done for David, and what David is grateful for is *velo-velo echad mehem*, that but for G'd's kindness not one of all

יז וְלִי מַה-יָּקְרוּ רֵעֶיךָ אֵל מֶה עָצְמוּ רָאשֵׁיהֶם:
יח אֶסְפְּרֵם מֵחוֹל יִרְבּוּן הֱקִיצֹתִי וְעוֹדִי עִמָּךְ:

these people in the book of Adam would have lived an entire day (1000 years), not even Adam himself, since he bequeathed David 70 years of his "day", i.e. of his life.

17. The Zohar says that the 70 years that David lived were allocated to him from the patriarchs. This is because the patriarchs themselves had been allocated part of Adam's spirit, soul, similar to the way David had received such an allocation.

We have explained elsewhere (Psalm 144,4) that in order for David to serve as 'substitute' for Adam, i.e. to repair the spiritual damage Adam had inflicted on earth through his sin, – he had to receive 70 years of the life Adam had not completed on this earth and through the re-incarnations which had already been channelled through the lives of the patriarchs.

The spiritual value of being the re-incarnate of Adam directly could not match the spiritual value of being the re-incarnate of a soul which had already experience *gilgul*, transmigration and refinement in the bodies of the patriarchs.

It was this which filled David with holiness, so that we refer to him as *chay vekayam*, i.e. enduring forever though a living person. David's death, though witnessed by many, was not a total departure from this world, as is well known, and this is why he says *veli mah yakru*, all the gifts of Adam, i.e. the 70 years of his life, would not have been precious enough for me, *yakru li*, had it not been for Your companions O G'd, *rey-echa*, i.e. the patriarchs who had given me the 70 years also. Both the Targum and Rashi understand the word *rey-echa* in this vein.

Had I ONLY had the gift of 70 years from Adam, I would have died a normal death after 70 years. Combined with the gift of the patriarchs of another 70 years, I have acquired ongoing life. This is what David means when he says *mah otzmu rosheyhem*, see how powerful were the "beginnings" of my days. The *rosheyhem* are the 70 years bequeathed by the patriarchs. These years have lent *otzem*, strength, power to the 70 years which David had been bequeathed by Adam himself.

18. As a result, my life is longer than that of the bird *chol*, i.e. I will count till they are more than *chol*. (compare Bereshit Rabbah 19 about the bird *chol* which lives forever)

Hekitzoti, when I awake, i.e. at the time of the resurrection, I will awake from sleep, I do not first have to return to dust since *odi*

19*O God, if You would only slay the wicked— you murderers, away from me!—*
20*who invoke You for intrigue, Your enemies who swear by You falsely.*
21*O LORD, You know I hate those who hate You, and loathe Your adversaries.*
22*I feel a perfect hatred toward them; I count them my enemies.*
23*Examine me, O God, and know my mind; probe me and know my thoughts.*
24*See if I have vexatious ways, and guide me in ways everlasting.*

140 *For the leader. A psalm of David.*
2*Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men; save me from the lawless,*

imach, I have been with You all the time. (compare Job 29,18 "and I will increase his days like those of *chol*. See also Sanhedrin 108)

The reason for all this is that *odi imach*, my essence has remained with You all the time that I had been fully alive.

Similarly, I will not have to disintegrate into earth at the time preceding the resurrection, (to remove the *zuhama*, pollution absorbed via the serpent), rather I will be resurrected like a person who has simply been asleep, has lost temporary control of his body. The resurrection will add to my previous strength, instead of totally restoring it. This in spite of the fact that during the many years of my sleep prior to the resurrection, such sleep is more profound than the normal sleep of people who re-awaken daily.

19. David says that though he is aware that his adversaries are out to kill him throughout his long life, and seeing that they are free agents – are difficult for G'd to interfere with, nonetheless he does not ask G'd to kill those adversaries, only inasmuch as they sin against G'd, *im tiktol eloka rasha*. As to their being *anshey damim*, bloodthirsty people against their fellow man, David relies fully on G'd's protection, who by merely deflecting such people, i.e. *suru meni*, clearly assures David's safety.

20. The wicked whose death I ask for, says David, is not the one who speaks out against You, or even who is active against You; only the hypocrites whose wickedness lies in their belief that You are too far removed to supervise individual or collective fates of human beings. *Yomrucha*, they pronounce You as "TOO EXALTED". Similarly,

יט אִם־תִּקְטֹל אֱלוֹהַּ רָשָׁע וְאַנְשֵׁי דָמִים סוּרוּ מֶנִּי׃
כ אֲשֶׁר יֹמְרוּךָ לִמְזִמָּה נָשׂוּא לַשָּׁוְא עָרֶיךָ׃
כא הֲלוֹא־מְשַׂנְאֶיךָ יְהוָה אֶשְׂנָא וּבְתְקוֹמְמֶיךָ אֶתְקוֹטָט׃
כב תַּכְלִית שִׂנְאָה שְׂנֵאתִים לְאֹיְבִים הָיוּ לִי׃
כג חָקְרֵנִי אֵל וְדַע לְבָבִי בְּחָנֵנִי וְדַע שַׂרְעַפָּי׃
כד וּרְאֵה אִם־דֶּרֶךְ עֹצֶב־בִּי וּנְחֵנִי בְּדֶרֶךְ עוֹלָם׃

קמ א לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד׃
ב חַלְּצֵנִי יְהוָה מֵאָדָם רָע מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תִּנְצְרֵנִי׃

those who swear false oaths in the conviction that You do not hear them or do not care.

Those however, who think of harming G'd, I do not ask their death, since they act out of ignorance.

21. I hate those who hate You, and I quarrel with those who arise against You. Since it is difficult to know what a person thinks, how can David declare that he hates those who hate the Lord in their hearts?

What he says is that the heart acts like a mirror in revealing to others what their owners think. Hence, even without being part of his fellow man David can tell what goes on in another person's mind, how much more so are You G'd aware of all that such person thinks!

22. Do not say that my hatred is based only on an estimate of what my fellow man thinks, and that perhaps such person does not hate G'd at all. David says, "I hate them utterly, because I know they have become my enemies, my heart knows the truth. People who hated my enemies and who supported me against them, my heart should have loved. If my heart hates them nonetheless, it must be because these people hate You, secretly".

23. If You challenge me for wanting You to kill people who have sinned only in thought, not in deed, and suggest that I myself would be punished if my thoughts were to be examined, I answer, *chokreyni keyl*, examine me O G'd, *da levavi*, even though knowledge of a person's mind does not commit such person to act in accordance with his thoughts, "KNOW MY THOUGHTS"!

24. Though You will not condemn me on account of my thoughts, – I invite You to guide my thinking if You have reason to fault my future thinking, *derech otzev bi*.

3*whose minds are full of evil schemes, who plot war every day.*
4*They sharpen their tongues like serpents; spiders' poison is on their lips.* Selah
5*O LORD, keep me out of the clutches of the wicked; save me from lawless men who scheme to make me fall.*
6*Arrogant men laid traps with ropes for me; they spread out a net along the way; they set snares for me.* Selah
7*I said to the LORD: You are my God; give ear, O LORD, to my pleas for mercy.*

Psalm 140

2. It appears that our sages (see Megillah 6, concerning verse 9) understood this Psalm as an expression by the *kneset Yisrael*, the Jewish people speaking collectively in the singular, concerning their petition to G'd. This is why the Psalmist phrases it "rescue me", instead of "rescue us". The word *chaltzeni*, rescue me, refers to the Babylonian exile.

Having experienced THAT rescue, I will be confident that You will protect me, *tintzereyni*, from a man of violence i.e. Haman, during the exile under the Medes (Ahasverus).

3. This verse refers to the Greek exile, during which the Seleucids planned incessantly how to make me give up G'd's laws in favour of adopting the Hellenistic outlook on the world. "They gather daily for wars", i.e. sometimes they fight my Sabbath observance, sometimes my New Year observance, other times the rites of circumcision etc. (compare Bereshit Rabbah 2,5)

4. The long Roman exile, regarding the end of which we have not been given any timetable, is generally called the exile of Edom, to indicate the interminable rule of the descendants of Esau.

The Psalmist says "they have sharpened their tongue like that of a serpent, viper's venom under their lips, for an interminably long period", i.e. *selah*.

5. Now the Psalmist elaborates on what he had used as a caption in verse 2. "From the hands of the wicked man", refers to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. Through my having been rescued from his tyranny, I will gain confidence that I can escape Haman the man of violence. The reason is that both those men attempted to lead me astray from my Creator, *asher chashvu lidchot pe-amay*, they attempted to derail my steps, cause me to sin.

Nebuchadnezzar insisted that the elite of the Jews, i.e. Chanayah, Mishael and Azaryah bow to an image. (Daniel 3,13–30)

ג אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ רָעוֹת בְּלֵב כָּל-יוֹם יָגוּרוּ מִלְחָמוֹת:
ד שָׁנְנוּ לְשׁוֹנָם כְּמוֹ-נָחָשׁ חֲמַת עַכְשׁוּב תַּחַת שִׂפְתֵימוֹ סֶלָה:
ה שָׁמְרֵנִי יְהוָה מִידֵי רָשָׁע מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תִּנְצְרֵנִי אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ לִדְחוֹת פְּעָמָי:
ו טָמְנוּ-גֵאִים פַּח לִי וַחֲבָלִים פָּרְשׂוּ רֶשֶׁת לְיַד-מַעְגָּל מֹקְשִׁים שָׁתוּ-לִי סֶלָה:
ז אָמַרְתִּי לַיהוָה אֵלִי אָתָּה הַאֲזִינָה יְהוָה קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנָי:

Ahasverus insisted that they eat at the feast he had prepared (Esther 1,8). Though the drinking was NOT compulsory as it states there, the eating was. This interpretation is based on *la-assot kirtzon ish ve-ish*, to do the will of both Haman and Mordechai, each one being described as *ish*. The former wanted them to eat the king's food, the latter did not want them to drink wine which had been used for idolatrous libations. (compare Midrash Chazit, and Yaarot Devash volume 2, page 12

Had G'd not protected Chananyah and his companions, – the next generation under Ahasverus would not have had their merit to draw on, and would not have been saved from the enticement to sin by Haman and Ahasverus.

6. The snare that Nebuchadnezzar set for me was that he commanded all nations (i.e. their representatives) to prostrate themselves before a golden image of himself he had constructed. (Daniel 3,5–6)

This was NOT idolatry in the accepted sense of Jewish halachah (religious law). It was ony a symbol of the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. He wanted to subjugate Israel under his *sar*, i.e. the spiritual counterpart of Babylonia in the celestial regions. By this he wanted to nullify the experience he had had in his dream, (Daniel 2,31–36) when the image had been smashed by a stone held by invisible hands.

The *chavalim*, ropes, refer to Haman and Ahasverus who (according to Midrash Chazit) surrounded the Jewish population of Shushan to bring them to the king's feast, and who by placing whores opposite them at the tables, tried to tempt them into debauchery for 7 days, i.e. *mokshim shatu li selah*.

7. Then I said to G'd "You are my G'd", i.e. a reference to Esther

8O GOD, my Lord, the strength of my deliverance, You protected my head on the day of battle.
9O LORD, do not grant the desires of the wicked; do not let their plan succeed, else they be exalted. Selah
10May the heads of those who beset me be covered with the mischief of their lips.
11May coals of fire drop down upon them, and they be cast into pits, never to rise again.
12Let slanderers have no place in the land; let the evil of the lawless man drive him into corrals.
13I know that the LORD will champion the cause of the poor, the right of the needy.
14Righteous men shall surely praise Your name; the upright shall dwell in Your presence.

who had reportedly prayed *eli eli lammah azavtani*, my G'd, my G'd why have You forsaken me? (Psalm 22,2) *Eli attah*, You are my G'd, and NOT the image. Therefore, "please listen to my entreaties!".

Since all Esther had done by her marriage to Ahasverus, had been done in private, no one knowing that the queen was Jewish, she did not consider herself guilty of desecrating G'd's name, and prayed in this manner. (Yuma 29 understands Psalm 22 as having been said by Esther.)

Since You have remained my G'd – even after my marriage to Ahasverus – please listen to my pleadings on behalf of the Jewish people!

8. Concerning the Greek exile, the Psalmist acknowledges G'd's help to Yehudah Hamaccabi in his battle against the Greeks.

9. Concerning the Roman exile, (the present exile), the Psalmist says "do not grant the desires of the wicked one, i.e. Amalek, do not let him achieve his aspirations", i.e. his belief that his supremacy over me will last forever, *yaromu selah.*

10. The "head" of those who surround me, i.e. the Torah and the diligent efforts of my lips to study it, i.e. *amal sefatay*, – have enabled me to keep my faith in G'd, and that should act as a protective cover, i.e. *ye-chassemo.*

11–12. Then burning coals will fall upon them (Amalek etc.). A man who uses his tongue deceptively, i.e. Gog, prior to the final attempt to corrupt Israel at the time of the messianic wars, shall not establish himself, i.e. *yikon*, he shall fall never to rise again.

According to Rashi the reference is to Esau who entrapped with

ח יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי עֹז יְשׁוּעָתִי סַכּוֹתָה לְרֹאשִׁי בְּיוֹם נָשֶׁק:
ט אַל-תִּתֵּן יְהוָה מַאֲוַיֵּי רָשָׁע זְמָמוֹ אַל-תָּפֵק יָרוּמוּ סֶלָה:
י רֹאשׁ מְסִבָּי עֲמַל שְׂפָתֵימוֹ יְכַסֻּמוֹ:
יא יְמִיטוּ עֲלֵיהֶם גֶּחָלִים בָּאֵשׁ יַפִּלֵם בְּמַהֲמֹרוֹת בַּל-יָקוּמוּ:
יב אִישׁ לָשׁוֹן בַּל-יִכּוֹן בָּאָרֶץ אִישׁ-חָמָס רָע יְצוּדֶנּוּ לְמַדְחֵפוֹת:
יג יָדַעְתִּי כִּי-יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה דִּין עָנִי מִשְׁפַּט אֶבְיוֹנִים:
יד אַךְ צַדִּיקִים יוֹדוּ לִשְׁמֶךָ יֵשְׁבוּ יְשָׁרִים אֶת-פָּנֶיךָ:

words. (compare Genesis 25,28, Rashi and Tanchuma) *Ish chamass ra*, may the violence this wicked man practiced, catch him and cause his overthrow (plural) both at the hands of Israel, and later in purgatory.

13. At the time when the Messiah will come, i.e. a poor man *ani*, riding on a donkey, who will demand justice for Israel and judgment against the nations which have oppressed Israel, *yadati*, I know, *ki ya-aseh hashem* that G'd will then mete out judgment, and uphold the justice of the destitute, i.e. Israel.

14. Israel will consist of 2 categories of people then. There will be both the righteous, i.e. *tzaddikim*, and the *yesharim*, the people who are more than merely righteous, who perform over and beyond the call of duty.

Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachmeni (Baba Batra 75) has taught that "3 have G'd's name associated with them, the righteous, the Messiah and Jerusalem". He supports his statement with scriptural proof.

We would have thought that all those who will be redeemed will have to thank the Lord (seeing their name is associated with the name of G'd), i.e. both the *tzaddikim*, and the *yesharim*.

The Psalmist therefore says that ONLY the *tzaddikim* need to thank the Lord, seeing they have been granted the privilege that G'd's name has been associated with them. The *yesharim* on the other hand are ENTITLED to their appellation due to their OWN merit, they will sit in G'd's Presence (a much closer relationship than having G'd's name associated with them). Hence they do not have to thank Your name.

141 *A psalm of David.*
I call You, O LORD, hasten to me; give ear to my cry when I call You.
2Take my prayer as an offering of incense, my upraised hands as an evening sacrifice.
3O LORD, set a guard over my mouth, a watch at the door of my lips;
4let my mind not turn to an evil thing, to practice deeds of wickedness with men who are evildoers; let me not feast on their dainties.
5Let the righteous man strike me in loyalty, let him reprove me; let my head not refuse such choice oil.
My prayers are still against their evil deeds.

Psalm 141

1. We have explained on the verse (Isaiah 65,24) "I will answer before they will call, and while they are still speaking, I will hear", that the meaning is that before you will ask for your needs, I will agree in heaven to do your will and you on earth will NOT know that I have answered. Therefore you will still be carrying on with your prayer until you have completed it.

Since it is possible to assume that once I have answered your request I would not bother to pay heed to your prayer, the prophet says that "I will hearken as long as they are talking".

Here too, the Psalmist says "I have called You", i.e. open my lips O G'd, so that I have merely to call you and You hasten to respond; even after You have already responded to my call – listen to my voice while I am still calling You".

2. Should You say that since You have already responded to my request, what point is there in Your still listening to the words of my request? the answer is that my prayer should stand before You like incense. Even though You respond to the offering, You still like the incense and You react to it. Similarly, I want You to react to my prayer.

Even though in the sacrificial service of the daily morning offerings, the offering of the incense precedes the burning of the *eyvarim*, the fat parts of the sacrifice that are not consumed, David says that he does not refer to the part of the incense which is offered in the morning, but to the part which is offered at the end of the daily evening sacrifice, *minchat erev*.

3. Our sages have included a paragraph in the New year's prayers which begins with the words *ochilah la-kel*, "I firmly trust in G'd and

קמא א מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד יְהוָה קְרָאתִיךָ חוּשָׁה לִי הַאֲזִינָה קוֹלִי
בְּקָרְאִי-לָךְ:
ב תִּכּוֹן תְּפִלָּתִי קְטֹרֶת לְפָנֶיךָ מַשְׂאַת כַּפַּי מִנְחַת-עָרֶב:
ג שִׁיתָה יְהוָה שָׁמְרָה לְפִי נְצֹרָה עַל-דַּל שְׂפָתָי:
ד אַל-תַּט-לִבִּי לְדָבָר רָע לְהִתְעוֹלֵל עֲלִלוֹת בְּרֶשַׁע אֶת
-אִישִׁים פֹּעֲלֵי-אָוֶן וּבַל-אֶלְחַם בְּמַנְעַמֵּיהֶם:
ה יְהֲלְמֵנִי צַדִּיק חֶסֶד וְיוֹכִיחֵנִי שֶׁמֶן רֹאשׁ אַל-יָנִי
רֹאשִׁי כִּי-עוֹד וּתְפִלָּתִי בְּרָעוֹתֵיהֶם:

plead with Him, asking Him to grant me the gift of speech – so that I may sing His praise amongst people etc". The gist of the lyrics of this poem consist of 2 ideas. 1)Before I even utter a word of prayer, may G'd inspire me to phrase my prayers suitably, i.e. *horem mah sheyomru* teach them (Israel) what they should say. 2) *Shelo yikashlu bilshonam*, let them not stumble in their language. (in their mode of expression)

With reference to the above considerations, the Psalmist says: 1)guard my mouth, *shomrah le-phi*. 2) *Nitzrah al dal sefatai*, ensure that my lips do not slip up in presenting my humble words.

4. Guard my heart that I will not incline to something evil, *ledavar ra*, that I should not engage in retribution against those who *le-hitollel alilot* in paying them back for what they have done to me, have acted evilly against me, *po-aley aven*. Let me not even plan wickedness. If, for instance I have lost 100 dollars through their wickedness against me, do not let me plan something that would cause them to lose 100 dollars.

U-val elcham, may I not find food, i.e. satisfaction in paying them back, for then such food would have the taste of violence, *oshek*, which was what procured THEIR pleasures when they consume their ill gotten bread.

5. Should You (G'd) ask what You should do for me to help me avoid taking revenge in such fashion, the answer is simple.

When I deserve disciplining, do not discipline me by using wicked people, but let the Righteous One smite me, then this is an act of *chessed*, loving kindness. Let Him correct me with words. This will be more effective than if wicked people torment me.

Also, the oil of my head, (Psalm 23,5) i.e. my right to wear the crown of the kingdom I will not forfeit then, i.e. *al yoni*, since perchance I might commit acts of violence against my oppressors.

6*May their judges slip on the rock, but let my words be heard, for they are sweet.*
7*As when the earth is cleft and broken up our bones are scattered at the mouth of* Sheol.
8*My eyes are fixed upon You, O GOD my Lord; I seek refuge in You, do not put me in jeopardy.*
9*Keep me from the trap laid for me, and from the snares of evildoers.*
10*Let the wicked fall into their nets while I alone come through.*

142 *A* maskil *of David, while he was in the cave. A prayer.*

This is a reference to the advice given David by Abigail against taking revenge on Naval Hacarmeli, (Samuel I 25,25–31). At the time, though not yet king effectively, David had already been anointed by the prophet Samuel. (Samuel I 16,13)

The Psalmist then says that he does not want to forfeit his destiny which Samuel had foreshadowed by anointing him. Since we have a tradition that kings who have been anointed with balsamwood oil (***shemen apharsemon***, according to Radak on Samuel I 10,1) or kings who have been anointed with oil out of an earthenware jar, i.e. ***pach***, have no assurance that their dynasty will endure, David is not concerned about his dynasty, ***shemen rosh al yani***, I will not forfeit what I acquired by the oil on my head, seeing that he had been anointed out of a horn with the proper ***shemen hamishchah*** the oil used for anointing the High Priest and the kings of Yehudah, i.e. David and Solomon. (compare Horiot 12)

6. I have observed how the people's judges, i.e. Moses and Aaron have been hurled down, i.e. ***nishmetu***, at the site of the rock ***sela***, when they addressed their charges with the words "listen you obstinate ones" (Numbers 20,10).

Moses and Aaron were not allowed to enter the land of Israel, though the people whom they had addressed had been sinful. However, G'd wants HIS people to be treated respectfully by its leaders; hence "I would not even SAY harsh words to my adversaries".

Rather, ***vesham-u devarai ki na-eymu***, they will hear only pleasant words from me.

7. Another reason is, that even while Israel is undeserving, G'd

ז נִשְׁמְטוּ בִידֵי-סֶלַע שׁפְטֵיהֶם וְשָׁמְעוּ אֲמָרַי כִּי נָעֲמוּ:
ח כְּמוֹ פֹלֵחַ וּבֹקֵעַ בָּאָרֶץ נִפְזְרוּ עַצְמֵינוּ לְפִי שְׁאוֹל:
ט כִּי אֵילֶךָ יֱהוִה אֲדֹנָי עֵינָי בְּכָה חָסִיתִי אַל-תְּעַר נַפְשִׁי:
י שָׁמְרֵנִי מִידֵי פַח יָקְשׁוּ לִי וּמֹקְשׁוֹת פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן:
יא יִפְּלוּ בְמַכְמֹרָיו רְשָׁעִים יַחַד אָנֹכִי עַד-אֶעֱבוֹר:

קמב א מַשְׂכִּיל לְדָוִד בִּהְיוֹתוֹ בַמְּעָרָה תְּפִלָּה:

crushes the righteous to achieve atonement for the people through the suffering of the righteous. We know that the earth needs to be crushed by the plough into a lot of small pieces in order to produce its harvest. Similarly, my bones have been crushed, and I feel as if I am on the brink of the grave, *lephi she-ol*, – through my many afflictions, in order that my suffering can protect and provide sustenance for the multitude who do not have merits of their own.

8. Another reason David does not want to retaliate against his enemies – though he is entitled to use a pre-emptive strike against those who threaten to kill him, (compare Sanhedrin 72) is, that he will thereby forfeit some of the merits he has accumulated. Hence "my eye is trained on You", – I have trust in You, that You will not "denude" my soul, i.e. will not empty my soul of its merits.

9. You O G'd might say that even by "denuding" i.e. ***te-ar***, my soul of its merits this would not suffice to save me, since my adversaries are people equipped with a free will, and are therefore difficult for G'd to interfere with. This is especially so, since David wants G'd to remain inactive in the matter. Therefore, David says "I ask You not to cancel their freedom of choice, but to let them lay their snares" ***pach yakshu li***, and THEN ***shomreyni mi-yedey pach***, protect my feet from stepping into their snares.

10. The holy spirit replies in the name of G'd, that since David only asked to be saved from stumbling into the snares set for him, and did NOT ask that those who set the snares should themselves be trapped by them, I, G'd will do MORE than he requested.

They, i.e. the ***resha-im***, the wicked people, will fall into these nets they have constructed to catch David, and I will remain on his side, ***yachad anochi***, until the time comes when ***e-evor***, I will walk ahead of him to destroy his enemies. At that time the wicked will melt away like wax before a flame. (Psalm 68,3)

2I cry aloud to the LORD; I appeal to the LORD loudly for mercy.
3I pour out my complaint before Him; I lay my trouble before Him 4when my spirit fails within me.
You know my course; they have laid a trap in the path I walk.
5Look at my right and see— I have no friend; there is nowhere I can flee, no one cares about me.
6So I cry to You, O LORD; I say, "You are my refuge, all I have in the land of the living."
7Listen to my cry, for I have been brought very low; save me from my pursuers, for they are too strong for me.

Psalm 142

1. Normal people, while in the dangerous position David found himself in, hiding in a cave without escape route, would lose their cool, and their prayers would reflect their disturbed frame of mind. Not so David, of whom the prophet had recorded (Samuel I 18,14) "and David acted intelligently and of balanced mind, *bechol derachav*, in all his undertakings. To underline this, the Psalm starts with a reminder of that statement, *maskil*, to tell us that even when in the cave, David prayed with a fully balanced mind.

2. If David were to raise his voice in supplication to G'd in the cave, Saul would hear him and he would be caught; so David says: "just as I would raise my voice in prayer to G'd when the situation warrants it and YOU are close, so my voice is also directed towards You NOW when I entreat You in a whisper and keep my prayer short.

3. When the situation permits it, I pour out my speech before Him, i.e. I pray at length. Now that the situation does not permit, *tzarati agid*, that I tell my troubles at length, I have to be brief. We have explained in Genesis 24,23, that the word *le-hagid* to tell, implies telling in detail. When Eliezer stood at the well, having met Rebeccah, he asked her "whose daughter are you", *hagidi no li*, please tell me. We then find Rebeccah telling Eliezer details about her ancestry he had not asked about, as well as details about her family's economic status. (verse 24–25)

David says that when he "pours out", i.e. does something in a single instant, – like the pouring out of a bucket, – his prayer before G'd, it is just as if he were *tzarati agi*, I would tell my troubles at length at other less critical occasions.

4. David recalls that G'd had protected him at a time when he had asked for his physical life to be spared – because "You knew my

ב קוֹלִי אֶל-יְהוָה אֶזְעָק קוֹלִי אֶל-יְהוָה אֶתְחַנָּן:
ג אֶשְׁפֹּךְ לְפָנָיו שִׂיחִי צָרָתִי לְפָנָיו אַגִּיד:
ד בְּהִתְעַטֵּף עָלַי רוּחִי וְאַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ נְתִיבָתִי בְּאֹרַח-זוּ אַהֲלֵךְ טָמְנוּ פַח לִי:
ה הַבֵּיט יָמִין וּרְאֵה וְאֵין-לִי מַכִּיר אָבַד מָנוֹס מִמֶּנִּי אֵין דּוֹרֵשׁ לְנַפְשִׁי:
ו זָעַקְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אָמַרְתִּי אַתָּה מַחְסִי חֶלְקִי בְּאֶרֶץ הַחַיִּים:
ז הַקְשִׁיבָה אֶל-רִנָּתִי כִּי-דַלּוֹתִי מְאֹד הַצִּילֵנִי מֵרֹדְפַי כִּי אָמְצוּ מִמֶּנִּי:

path", i.e. that I would subsequently walk in Your ways. Yet NOW that I do walk in Your ways, they want to kill me!? Even *behitatef alay ruchi* when my spirit had enshrouded me, i.e. when it had still been my destiny to be stillborn, You knew the path I would take.

If, so far, I have walked narrowly in Your path, I am prepared to do this on a broader basis, *be-orach*, but when I tried, I am being pursued through the Sippim, the residents of the desert of Sif telling Saul of my hideout. (Samuel I 26,2)

5. The kabbalists, when describing the judgment procedures in celestial regions, view the supporters of the accused as being on his right, while his accusers are standing on his left. David describes the space on his right as being devoid of supporters, i.e. *eyn li makir*, no one wants to know me, *avad manoss*, I have lost every refuge down here on earth. *Eyn doresh lenafshi*, no one cares for me, else I would have places to flee to on earth.

6. Since no one else was my advocate, I cried out to You. I said that even if You will fail to protect my life here on earth, and agree to let me die, the reason must be that You want to assure me of life in the *eretz hachayim*, the hereafter.

7. David does not see any immediate advantage to being in the *eretz hachayim*, the hereafter, and asks to have his life on this earth spared, so that he could accumulate merits that will be useful to him in the hereafter at a later point in time. "May my prayers save me from my pursuers, even though they are men of free will". After all they are ungrateful to me, since their whole self confidence, i.e. *omtzu*, is *mimeni*, based on MY having slain Goliath whom they had

8Free me from prison, that I may praise Your name.
The righteous shall glory in me for Your gracious dealings with me.

143 *A psalm of David.*
O LORD, hear my prayer; give ear to my plea, as You are faithful; answer me, as You are beneficent.
2Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for before You no creature is in the right.

dreaded etc. *Omtzu mimeni*, their courage really came from me!

8. I have already stated that my time to be in ***eretz hachayim***, eternal life has not come, since my merits are too few as yet, and until I have enriched myself with merits, I cannot truly go to ***eretz hachayim.***

Therefore, *hotziyah* take my soul from me, You personally, i.e. the soul which is imprisoned in my body, so that I may acknowledge Your name. You will remove my soul from my body with a kiss. What David means is, that whenever the time of his death does arrive, he does not want to die at the hands of his adversaries – until such time as he has had a chance to thank G'd for letting him accumulate merits during a long life on this earth.

Another reason is, that when other righteous people observe what You G'd are doing on my behalf, they in turn will be inspired to accumulate many more merits themselves so that they will acquire crowns in *gan Eden*, the hereafter, which in turn will reflect their accomplishments on this earth. This is in line with the statement of Rav (Berachot 17) "the righteous will sit there with their respective crowns on their heads, and will enjoy the splendour of G'd's Presence".

Psalm 143

1. Since Rashi has understood this Psalm as a prayer by the Jewish nation in exile, we will adopt this as our premise. *Tefillah*, i.e. an introductory prayer always precedes ***techinah***, the requests, the pleas which form part of our prayers. We know that the term ***shemiyah*** hearing is used when there is a great distance between the speaker and the listener, whereas the term ***ha-azanah***, is used for listening when the speaker and the one addressed are near one another.

When Moses (Deuter. 32,1) addresses the heaven, he uses

ח הוֹצִיאָה מִמַּסְגֵּר נַפְשִׁי לְהוֹדוֹת אֶת-שְׁמֶךָ בִּי יַכְתִּרוּ צַדִּיקִים כִּי תִגְמֹל עָלָי:

קמג א מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד יְהוָה שְׁמַע תְּפִלָּתִי הַאֲזִינָה אֶל-תַּחֲנוּנַי בֶּאֱמֻנָתְךָ עֲנֵנִי בְּצִדְקָתֶךָ:
ב וְאַל-תָּבוֹא בְמִשְׁפָּט אֶת-עַבְדֶּךָ כִּי לֹא-יִצְדַּק לְפָנֶיךָ כָּל-חָי:

ha-azinu, since he was closer to heaven than to earth. He uses *ve-tishma*, when addressing the earth.

The prophet Isaiah on the other hand, whose stature did not equal that of Moses, was closer to earth. Hence, he said *shim-u shamayim ve-ha-azinu aretz*, hear o heaven and listen earth (Isaiah 1,2) (compare Sifri in Parshat Ha-azinu).

Our sages interpret the verse (Daniel 9,19) "please hear my Lord, please forgive my Lord", as follows. When beginning one's prayer, i.e. *tefillah*, the sinner is still far from G'd, hence the word *shema* is in place. Once he has introduced himself to G'd with *tefillah* however, and asked for forgiveness i.e. *hashem selachah*, one can continue by saying *hakshivah va-asseh al te-achar* i.e. listen intently and act without delay! In other words, one can presume to ask G'd not to delay His active response.

Following the same approach, the Psalmist i.e. Israel collectively, says *shema tefilati*, hear my prayer!, – and, having thus come closer to G'd, he continues "listen to my plea"!

Even though Zion who had not sinned will be redeemed *betorat mishpat* under the aegis of justice, (Isaiah 1,27), yet its returning inhabitants will depend on *tzedakah*, charity, not having the merit to deserve redemption.

Therefore they need to appeal, i.e. *tachanunay*. The *tzedakah* charitable acts that bring about redemption are either performed by Israel themselves, or are acts of charity vis a vis Israel, performed by G'd.

We plead that *aneyni*, that G'd's acts of charity will be put in motion though *emunatecha*, our faith in You, and that G'd should not wait for acts of charity by us the Jewish people.

2. Should You G'd reply we should be satisfied that You do not deal with us on the basis of *mishpat*, strict justice, but that You will

[3]My foe hounded me; he crushed me to the ground; he made me dwell in darkness like those long dead.
[4]My spirit failed within me; my mind was numbed with horror.
[5]Then I thought of the days of old; I rehearsed all Your deeds, recounted the work of Your hands.
[6]I stretched out my hands to You, longing for You like thirsty earth. Selah

wait for OUR acts of charity, our reply is that the premise of dealing with us on the basis of justice is quite unthinkable, since *ki lo yitzdak lefanecha kol chay*, there is not a living creature that could prevail on such terms. Even if someone is *avdecha*, Your servant, *lo tavo bemishpat* You could not deal with him by employing *mishpat*, strict justice. Even the angels would be found wanting. The word *kol chay*, refers to angels who "live forever".

3. The Psalmist may refer to the various exiles separately in this verse. *Ki radaf*, for the enemy pursued, applies to the exile under Nebuchadnezzar who pursued "my soul", i.e. attempted to trick me into sinning by bowing to his image.

Concerning the exile under the Medes, (Ahasverus) the Psalmist says *dikka la-aretz chayati*, 'he crushed my life to the ground, i.e. through the 3 days of fasting at the time of Esther's intercession with the king.

Concerning the exile under the Greeks, whose sole objective was to estrange us to our religion, the Psalmist says *hoshivani bamchashakim*, he has made me sit in dark places, i.e. has deprived me of the spiritual illumination of Torah, *ke-meytay olam*, so that we became the opposite of people endowed with *Torat chayim*, lifegiving Torah.

4. Those three relatively brief exiles were followed by the Roman exile, the long one, the more difficult one. Man's soul is placed inside a body which is apt to sin, and which condemns such soul to purgatory on account of the sins of the body it inhabits. It would be only natural for the soul (spirit, *ruach*) to hate such a body and to rejoice on the day sinful man receives his just deserts. Nonetheless, the Psalmist describes his spirit/soul as SO overcome by the troubles that have sought out David, (Israel) that it "envelops me", i.e. "I identify with it to such an extent that even my heart is amazed at my spirit's empathy".

5. If someone experiences trouble from his earliest youth, he does not really know the meaning of true distress. However, if a person

ג כִּי רָדַף אוֹיֵב נַפְשִׁי דִּכָּא לָאָרֶץ חַיָּתִי הוֹשִׁיבַנִי
בְמַחֲשַׁכִּים כְּמֵתֵי עוֹלָם:
ד וַתִּתְעַטֵּף עָלַי רוּחִי בְּתוֹכִי יִשְׁתּוֹמֵם לִבִּי:
ה זָכַרְתִּי יָמִים מִקֶּדֶם הָגִיתִי בְכָל-פָּעָלֶךָ בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ
אֲשׂוֹחֵחַ:
ו פָּרַשְׂתִּי יָדַי אֵילֶךָ נַפְשִׁי כְּאֶרֶץ-עָיֵפָה לְךָ סֶלָה:

experiences only G'd's grace, and suddenly becomes a victim of persecution, such a person truly feels the full extent of pain and distress. What the Psalmist is saying here is, that "I remember earlier times when the temple was standing, when *ve-hagiti*, I was preoccupied with proclaiming all Your deeds". The reference is to the daily hymns recited in the temple during the sacrificial services. On Sundays, I would recite the passage describing the creation of the first day, on Mondays the passage describing what G'd had created on the second day, and so on throughout the week. In this fashion I reviewed Your works O Lord on a weekly basis in the mishmarot, the delegations of Israel who would attend the daily services on a rotation basis. This took place outside the precincts of the temple.

Simultaneously, when entering the temple, the priests and Levites would extol *ma-asseh yadecha*, Your handiwork. We find a statement by the sage bar Kapparah in Ketuvot 5 "greater are the accomplishments of the righteous, i.e. the temple, than the works of the Almighty, i.e. the creation of the universe". Of the temple, the Torah says *mikdash hashem konenu yadecha*, the sanctuary for G'd YOUR HANDS (plural) have firmly established. (Exodus 15,17)

Of the creation the prophet says "also My hand (singular) founded earth". (Isaiah 48,14) The temple then rates as a greater feat than creation of the universe. Israel wishes that the exile had NOT been preceded by so much glory; it would then have been easier to bear.

6. Furthermore, in those days whenever I spread out my hands (in prayer) to You, the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, would rest on them since my soul was within me like tired earth, languishing, ever desiring to depart from me, to join the *Shechinah* which she is part of after all... This is only natural, since the part always has an innate craving to be re-united with the whole it has been removed from. Even when I would drop my hands, this desire on the part of my soul would continue, *selah*, indefinitely.

7*Answer me quickly, O LORD; my spirit can endure no more.*
Do not hide Your face from me, or I shall become like those who descend into the Pit.
8*Let me learn of Your faithfulness by daybreak, for in You I trust; let me know the road I must take, for on You I have set my hope.*
9*Save me from my foes, O LORD; to You I look for cover.*
10*Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God.*
Let Your gracious spirit lead me on level ground.

7. Israel in exile, asks to be answered quickly, not only because of the weariness of its body, but also *kaltah ruchi*, because my spiritual resources are exhausted; "do not hide Your face from me, else I will be compared to those who descend into purgatory, (*bor – gehinnom*) where body and soul are judged together". This is similar to the parable of the lame and the blind, each of whom pleaded inability to have robbed the vineyard due to his respective handicap, till it was demonstrated to them by the judge that they could have been guilty by having joined forces, i.e. the blind having carried the lame, who then acted as his eyes.

The same applies to the relationship of body and soul while Israel is in exile; they are both judged as a unit.

Since this is so, the fact that Abraham chose the various exiles for us in order to save us from descending into purgatory, seems to have proven ineffective. (compare Shemot Rabbah 51,7)

8. We know that the timing of the *keytz*, the end of exile, can occur either due to merit, in which case it is *achishenah*, I will hasten it; (Isaiah 60,22) or it can occur *be-ittah* at a prearranged time regardless of Israel's merit.

Here the Psalmist asks for the redemption *ba-boker*, in the morning, i.e. at the earliest possible moment, like *achishenah*. The merit the Psalmist claims as his justification is Israel's faith in G'd throughout exile, i.e. *ki becha batachti*.

Should this merit be insufficient to secure EARLY redemption, the Psalmist says *hodieyni derech*, teach me a way to accumulate sufficient merit, and I will tread that path.

To the argument based on Deut. 5,26 that "all is in the power of heaven except the fear of heaven", i.e. G'd does not coerce us to adopt a certain lifestyle, Israel says that "I have already elevated my soul towards You", as proven in the verse quoted above where G'd

ז מַהֵר עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה כָּלְתָה רוּחִי אַל-תַּסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי
וְנִמְשַׁלְתִּי עִם-יֹרְדֵי בוֹר:
ח הַשְׁמִיעֵנִי בַבֹּקֶר חַסְדֶּךָ כִּי-בְךָ בָטָחְתִּי הוֹדִיעֵנִי דֶּרֶךְ
-זוּ אֵלֶךְ כִּי-אֵלֶיךָ נָשָׂאתִי נַפְשִׁי:
ט הַצִּילֵנִי מֵאֹיְבַי יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ כִּסִּיתִי:
י לַמְּדֵנִי לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנֶךָ כִּי-אַתָּה אֱלוֹהָי רוּחֲךָ טוֹבָה
תַּנְחֵנִי בְּאֶרֶץ מִישׁוֹר:

has acknowledged Israel's high moral niveau. The Talmud Avodah Zarah 5, quotes Moses as berating Israel for being ungrateful and not seizing the opportunity – (when G'd said "who would give that it remain so") – and ask G'd that He should decree so.

We have explained there, that although we have the principle of free choice, once a person has achieved a status of being a G'd fearing individual, he can expect help from G'd to prevent him from BACKSLIDING into sin. In a similar vein, our sages tell us that heaven warned certain forces NOT to subject highly placed individuals such as Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Akivah to temptation. (Kiddushin 81 and Yevamot 99)

In view of this, we can understand Moses berating Israel for not exploiting their status to ask G'd to help them maintain their lofty moral niveau.

In the same vein, the Psalmist asks G'd to teach him the way to remain on the right path, since ***elecha nassati nafshi***, since "I had brought myself on Your wavelength already once".

9. Man has to contend with 2 kinds of enemies. One enemy attacks his body, the other his soul, his spirit. The latter enemy is the evil urge, ***yetzer hara***. The evil urge is by far the greater of the two enemies, seeing he tries to drive a wedge between man and G'd. Also, any concession to THAT enemy brings another concession in its wake, ***aveyrah goreret aveyrah***, one sin inevitably leading to another.

The enemies the Psalmist asks to be delivered from, are the ones ***eylecha kissiti***, who cause me to pull a cover over me, separating me from You.

10. Having asked G'd to be saved from forces that interfere with his G'd fearing lifestyle, the Psalmist (i.e. Israel) now asks for assistance in POSITIVE ***mitzvah*** fulfilment.

Man can relate to G'd in two ways; David now asks help in

11*For the sake of Your name, O LORD, preserve me; as*
You are beneficent, free me from distress.
12*As You are faithful, put an end to my foes; destroy all*
my mortal enemies, for I am Your servant.

144 *Of David.*
Blessed is the LORD, my rock, who trains my hands for
battle, my fingers for warfare;
2*my faithful one, my fortress, my haven and my*
deliverer, my shield, in whom I take shelter, who makes
peoples subject to me.

acquiring positive merits. The Psalmist is not sure which way G'd prefers. He approaches G'd *ki attah elokay*, since You already are my G'd, i.e. I have demonstrated that I endeavour to fulfil Your commandments, You need not refrain from teaching me Your ways since this does not constitute interference with my freedom of choice. It would only be a continuation along a path I have already chosen; *ruchacha tovah tancheyni be-eretz mishor.*

The land of "the even path" is the *eretz hachayim*, the land of eternal life, i.e. the conduct which leads man to acquire eternal life.

11. "Give me life!", refers to the body, whose tendency to sin is great and who needs Your attribute of mercy. *Betzidkatcha totzi mitzarah nafshi*; since I cannot claim the same tendency for my soul, I have considered the *yetzer hara*, evil urge as my major enemy. Nonetheless, when it comes to asking You to rescue my soul, I appeal to Your *tzedek* Your righteousness, an attribute closer to the attribute of justice, since the soul is less apt to sin and cannot simply throw itself on the mercy of G'd.

12. Hence I do NOT plead that You destroy the enemies of my body, merely *tatzmit*, stun them. When they observe Your loving kindness towards me, it will stun them. I am satisfied with this. Not so, however, concerning the enemies of my soul, i.e. *tzorrerey nafshi.* I ask *veha-avadeta*, that You will utterly destroy them, since I am Your servant and those enemies interfere with my serving You.

Psalm 144

1. Due to the exalted nature of G'd, the gentiles have difficulty in accepting that G'd PERSONALLY would save not only a nation, but even individuals of that nation, seeing that He has so many agents

יא לְמַעַן-שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה תְּחַיֵּנִי בְּצִדְקָתְךָ תּוֹצִיא מִצָּרָה נַפְשִׁי:

יב וּבְחַסְדְּךָ תַּצְמִית אוֹיְבָי וְהַאֲבַדְתָּ כָּל-צֹרְרֵי נַפְשִׁי כִּי אֲנִי עַבְדֶּךָ:

קמד א לְדָוִד בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה צוּרִי הַמְלַמֵּד יָדַי לַקְרָב אֶצְבְּעוֹתַי לַמִּלְחָמָה:

ב חַסְדִּי וּמְצוּדָתִי מִשְׂגַּבִּי וּמְפַלְטִי-לִי מָגִנִּי וּבוֹ חָסִיתִי הָרוֹדֵד עַמִּי תַּחְתָּי:

that He could entrust this task to. Therefore, David acknowledges *baruch hashem tzuri*, blessed be the Lord who is my personal rock. He acknowledges having been trained by G'd in self defence, *ha-melamed yaday lakrav*. David refers to instances when he had killed a bear and a lion (Samuel I 17,34), in order that at a later date he should know how to defend himself against human enemies. His earlier experiences had taught David that G'd would also save him from Goliath, when he had taken 5 smooth stones, corresponding to the 5 fingers on his hand, i.e. *etz-beotai lamilchamah.*

This in turn strengthened his faith in G'd when battling the Philistine army, as we read in Samuel I 19,8 "the war against the Philistines continued" etc.

2. After that war, Saul aimed his spear at David, hitting the wall instead. (Samuel I 19,10) It was a great act of kindness by G'd to save David from the attack of a free willed person, when no attack had been expected and no evasive action had been taken. David therefore refers to this as *chassdi*, a kindness done for me.

Subsequently, when Saul tried to capture David at his home (Samuel I 19,11) it appears at first glance that his wife Michal saved him from capture. David is at pains to give credit for this to G'd and describe Him as *misgavi*, my refuge, since he appreciated that had it not been G'd's will, Michal's effort would have been thwarted.

Concerning his subsequent stay and escape at the Court of Achish king of Gat (Philistine), (Samuel I 21,16 and Psalm 34,10) David describes G'd as *mefalti li*, who granted me escape.

Still later, G'd saved David twice, when he had approached Saul's camp and after leaving the cave (Samuel I 24,4), and when he took Saul's spear and water jug. (Samuel I 26,12)

3O LORD, what is man that You should care about him,
mortal man, that You should think of him?
4Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing
shadow.
5O LORD, bend Your sky and come down; touch the
mountains and they will smoke.
6Make lightning flash and scatter them; shoot Your
arrows and rout them.
7Reach Your hand down from on high; rescue me, save
me from the mighty waters, from the hands of foreigners,
8whose mouths speak lies, and whose oaths are false.

In both instances *magini*, G'd has acted as my shield; when he went again to Achish later (Samuel I chapter 27) in spite of having caused death and destruction among the Philistine townships, claiming that he had merely laid waste Jewish settlements, he again demonstrated his trust In G'd, *haroded ami tachti*, until the whole Jewish people had accepted me as king, i.e. had prostrated themselves before me. In this fashion the blessing of Jacob to his son Yehudah (Genesis 49,8) that "your brothers, i.e. the other tribes, will prostrate themselves before you", i.e. your descendant David, came true.

The important thing in all this is, that G'd HIMSELF was involved in all these acts, not just G'd's angel or other agent.

3. In order that David should not be accused of thinking of himself as DESERVING of G'd's efforts on his behalf, David says that he is well aware that not because he represents *Adam* does he claim that G'd should display such intimacy with him i.e. *vateyda-eyhu*. On the other hand, if G'd related to him so because of his own self (personal merit), David says *mah enosh* I am aware that an ordinary human being, is too insignificant that *vatachshe-veyhu* You should be so mindful of him. David refers to himself as that ordinary human being.

Man, when near the peak of his moral stature, is called *Adam*, whereas when he is sinful, he is referred to as *enosh*.

4. *Adam*, who, though angel like before the sin, *la-hevel damah*, after he sinned is merely like a breath, i.e. transient matter, here today gone tomorrow.

Even *yamav*, the 70 years Adam bequeathed me, are not of much substance, i.e. *ke-tzeyl over*, they are like a passing shadow, since they will not endure. Therefore, everything G'd has done for me is due solely to HIS humility and His fondness for His servants.

5. Having acknowledged G'd's frequent intervention in David's life

ג יְהוָה מָה-אָדָם וַתֵּדָעֵהוּ בֶּן-אֱנוֹשׁ וַתְּחַשְּׁבֵהוּ:
ד אָדָם לַהֶבֶל דָּמָה יָמָיו כְּצֵל עוֹבֵר:
ה יְהוָה הַט-שָׁמֶיךָ וְתֵרֵד גַּע בֶּהָרִים וְיֶעֱשָׁנוּ:
ו בְּרוֹק בָּרָק וּתְפִיצֵם שְׁלַח חִצֶּיךָ וּתְהֻמֵּם:
ז שְׁלַח יָדֶיךָ מִמָּרוֹם פְּצֵנִי וְהַצִּילֵנִי מִמַּיִם רַבִּים מִיַּד בְּנֵי נֵכָר:
ח אֲשֶׁר פִּיהֶם דִּבֶּר-שָׁוְא וִימִינָם יְמִין שָׁקֶר:

through personal *hashgachah*, supervision, personal guidance, David now calls on G'd to demonstrate to the gentiles who deny such *hashgachah* – by repeating what had taken place at the revelation at Mount Sinai – that He does indeed continue to exercise this personal *hashgachah*.

Hence, "incline Your heavens O Lord and descend!" (Like You did on Mount Sinai at the time You gave us the Torah).

"*Ga be-harim*, touch the mountains, and they will go up in smoke". It will then become clear that Moses' having ascended to heaven at that time, – a patent impossibility – was due to G'd having lowered heaven to such a degree, that it practically touched earth, since G'd had tipped it. They will then recognize etc.

6. "Flash lightning and scatter them!" etc. i.e. do not kill them yet but make them realize that You are doing all this!.

7. Having sent such confusion upon them, extend both Your hands, i.e. the hand of justice and the hand of mercy. With Your hand of justice You will mete out judgment to the respective celestial representatives of the gentile nations, whereas with the other hand, the attribute of mercy, – deliver me and save me!

Once You have delivered me from *mayim rabim*, i.e. the spiritual counterparts of the nations who command large forces i.e. *mayim rabbim*, *hatzileyni miyad beney neychar* You can easily save me from the gentile nations themselves, i.e. their terrestrial kings.

8. The reason I ask for all these manifestations of Your power is only *asher pihem dibber shav*, since their mouths uttered falsehoods, because they said *al hashamayim kevodcha* that Your glory is only beyond the heavens. Once they will see that they have been wrong, they will realize that their faith in their own physical might i.e. *yeminam* was misplaced, was a trust in falsehood, i.e. *sheker*. The right hand, i.e. the might they rely on, will be proved to be *yemin sheker*, deceptive, and this is why I asked "stretch out Your hand

9O God, I will sing You a new song, sing a hymn to You with a ten-stringed harp,
10to You who give victory to kings, who rescue His servant David from the deadly sword.
11Rescue me, save me from the hands of foreigners, whose mouths speak lies and whose oaths are false.
12For our sons are like saplings, well-tended in their youth; our daughters are like cornerstones trimmed to give shape to a palace.

from on high" says David, so that they will know they possess no power of their own.

9. Our sages have compared the era of David and Solomon to the messianic era after which the fortunes of the Jewish people kept on declining until the destruction of the temple. (similar to Bamidbar Rabba 13,14)

There followed the 4 exiles, the greatest tragedy of which is the exile of the *Shechinah*, the Divine Presence. When we will come out of this exile, we will sing a new song. The heart of David's generation was already saddened by the foreknowledge of these historic events, the general outline of which had not been concealed from them. (Since we had been slated for exile since the time of Abraham, when he had chosen exile for the eventual sins of his descendants at the time of the covenant between the pieces.)

Had they NOT anticipated this, David would not have asked (verse 11) "rescue me and save me from the tyranny of the gentile nations" at such an idyllic time. Once the people of David's generation heard him pray in this fashion (verse 8), they themselves prayed collectively representing the body of the Jewish people, in a similar vein, also using the singular. (verse 11)

Their plea was that He who grants salvation to kings, i.e. David and Solomon (verse 10) should do likewise for the entire Jewish nation. The reason they used the singular, was to emphasize the unity of the Jewish nation, seeing that when Israel is united, it qualifies for G'd's help. Israel was wise not to commence asking on their OWN behalf, but on behalf of the exiled *Shechinah*.

This is the meaning of *elokim shir chadash*, I will sing a new song to celebrate G'd's coming out of exile. The reference is to the 4th of the exiles, since that will mark the conclusion of all exiles. However, Israel says, it would be better to banish the thought of exile already now, "so that I can sing to You on the 10 stringed instrument". Since at this time G'd's *Shechinah* is not yet in exile and all the 10 aspects

ט אֱלֹהִים שִׁיר חָדָשׁ אָשִׁירָה לָּךְ בְּנֵבֶל עָשׂוֹר אֲזַמְּרָה-
לָּךְ׃
י הַנּוֹתֵן תְּשׁוּעָה לַמְּלָכִים הַפּוֹצֶה אֶת-דָּוִד עַבְדּוֹ מֵחֶרֶב
רָעָה׃
יא פְּצֵנִי וְהַצִּילֵנִי מִיַּד בְּנֵי-נֵכָר אֲשֶׁר פִּיהֶם דִּבֶּר-שָׁוְא
וִימִינָם יְמִין שָׁקֶר׃
יב אֲשֶׁר בָּנֵינוּ כִּנְטִעִים מְגֻדָּלִים בִּנְעוּרֵיהֶם בְּנוֹתֵינוּ
כְּזָוִיֹת מְחֻטָּבוֹת תַּבְנִית הֵיכָל׃

of G'd appear unified, I will play that instrument now to symbolize this. (compare commentary on Psalm 33,2)

The "exile" of the *Shechinah* is conceived of as a dispersal of various aspects of the God-head prior to their re-unification.

10. After having asked to dispense with the exile of the *Shechinah* Israel goes on to speak about dispensing with exile for the Jewish people. Since the good in store for Israel is meant for the messianic period, all the glory of David and Solomon is really only a GIFT, a *HANOTEN teshuah limlachim.* – Do not say to us G'd, that the good experienced under David is not MEANT to be now.

Since You have seen fit to grant this gift to David and Solomon, why not do the same for the WHOLE of Israel? If the impediment to this is that we have been guilty of sins, – so has David, who has had Uriah killed. (Samuel II 11,14–17) i.e. the *cherev ra*, the wicked sword of the people of Ammon.

Perhaps the term *cherev ra* refers to David who employed that sword for an evil purpose. At any rate, says Israel, You have saved David in spite of all this.

11. I request the same on my behalf, says Israel. Especially so, since, if the nations i.e. *beney neychor* would execute Your will through punishing me for my sins, this would be acceptable. But, *ahser pi-hem dibber shav* those people deny Your *hashgachah*, personal supervision in this world, claiming *lo yire y-ah*, G'd does not see anything.

Secondly, it says in Your Torah (Deut. 32,26) "I said I will make an end of them... if I were not afraid of provoking the enemy (gentiles) to ascribe their success to their own prowess". (approx.)

The fact is that the gentiles DID ascribe their success against us as due to their own might, i.e. *ki yeminom yemin sheker*, their right hand falsely takes credit. In view of this, there seems no point in

13*Our storehouses are full, supplying produce of all kinds;*
our flocks number thousands, even myriads, in our fields;
14*our cattle are well cared for.*
There is no breaching and no sortie, and no wailing in our streets.
15*Happy the people who have it so; happy the people whose God is the LORD.*

exiling us among them! It would only result in a public desecration of Your name!!

12. The generation of David and Solomon having implored G'd to dispense with future exiles, now add another argument. We had explained on Psalm 143,8 that once one has adopted the path of Torah, one is entitled to assistance against having a moral relapse. All this is based on Moses' comments to Israel in connection with Deut. 5,26.

Such assistance is NOT to be equated with interference in one's freedom of choice.

Israel now argues that since their present generation is comparable to the generation of loyal Jews in the messianic era, they have already demonstrated that they have chosen the path of Torah, and are therefore entitled to assistance in remaining loyal, and therefore *galut*, exile will become redundant. "Our children have been brought up like carefully nurtured plants etc."

Though children do not NATURALLY choose the path of Torah, if they have been trained in it, have lived like *tzaddikim*, the righteous, they can be called *gadol*, mature instead of *na-ar*, immature youths. Their youth in such case does not put their adulthood to shame, it gives them a track record of *tziddkut*, righteousness.

Ibn Ezra on Proverbs 20,11 "even a child is known by his deeds, if his work is pure" etc., points out that Solomon should have said there *yukkar* (he can be recognized) instead of *yitnakker*, if the above translation conformed to the meaning. The word *yitnakker* however, means that by acting contrary to normal youthful behaviour, such a young person in effect disguises himself, misrepresents himself. By acting in an adult, responsible fashion, those who judge him merely by his actions remain unaware that he is really young in years. (compare Genesis 42,7 where Joseph is described as *mitnakker*, vis a vis his brothers, i.e. acting out of character.)

Israel describes its sons, – whose normal habit is to run around outside the house – as behaving as if they were closely guarded

יג מְזָוֵינוּ מְלֵאִים מְפִיקִים מִזַּן אֶל-זַן צֹאנֵנוּ מַאֲלִיפוֹת
מְרֻבָּבוֹת בְּחוּצוֹתֵינוּ:
יד אַלּוּפֵינוּ מְסֻבָּלִים אֵין פֶּרֶץ וְאֵין יוֹצֵאת וְאֵין צְוָחָה
בִּרְחֹבוֹתֵינוּ:
טו אַשְׁרֵי הָעָם שֶׁכָּכָה לּוֹ אַשְׁרֵי הָעָם שֶׁיְּהוָה אֱלֹהָיו:

inside, whereas its daughters whose normal behavious is to remain chastely indoors, as "like the columns which decorate the corners of the sanctuary".

Although these daughters are very visible outside the home, they guard their privacy like corner posts, which have one facet inwards and another facet pointing outwards. This, though they are beautiful and need not be ashamed to be seen outdoors, *mechutavot*, beautiful like the temple.

13. Proof that the present time is similar to the messianic era, is the fact that "our storage chambers are full, overflowing with food" i.e. the Torah's blessing "you will have to remove the old (harvest) to make room for the new harvest". (Leviticus 26,10)

The promises enumerated in that chapter are of the idyllic conditions when the Messiah arrives.

14. This verse describes more of the blessings in store for us at that time. Our oxen *alufeynu* will be so overburdened, that not having completed the threshing they will already be busy ploughing, etc.

15. The Psalmist says "I have acknowledged 2 aspects of the idyllic conditions we live in during the reign of David and Solomon". 1)The quality of our children, i.e. how well turned out they are. 2)The abundance of material blessings bestowed on us by G'd.

The holy spirit now says that a people's greatest happiness is when it is true and loyal to G'd.

This blessing outranks the blessings mentioned in verse 13 and 14.

Our sages have said concerning Psalm 32,1–2 "truly happy is he whose sins have been forgiven – happy he to whom G'd did not have to impute iniquity".

There is no question that the person referred to in verse 2, is on a loftier moral plane than the one mentioned in verse 1, since the former did not NEED to be forgiven.

145 *A song of praise. Of David.*
I will extol You, my God and king, and bless Your name forever and ever.
2Every day will I bless You and praise Your name forever and ever.
3Great is the LORD and much acclaimed; His greatness cannot be fathomed.
4One generation shall laud Your works to another and declare Your mighty acts.
5The glorious majesty of Your splendor and Your wondrous acts will I recite.
6Men shall talk of the might of Your awesome deeds, and I will recount Your greatness.
7They shall celebrate Your abundant goodness, and sing joyously of Your beneficence.

Psalm 145

1. The meaning of *tehillah le-david*, praise to David, instead of *tehillah lashem*, praise to the Lord, needs to be explained.

A terrestrial king can feel glorified by the adulation of the masses, – or by the tribute paid the king by outstanding individuals. However, how can the king of kings feel glorified?

Even if he were to be glorified by a human king, who is man that his adulation should matter?!

Therefore, the Psalmist says "when I praise and exalt You my G'd, this praise really reflects on me, David, and the praise which I had in mind by calling You my personal G'd – although of course You are everyone's G'd, – is a credit to me, since You have allowed me to describe You in those terms.

2/3. Having stated that David's merit in being allowed to praise G'd is an act of *tehillah*, praise for David, David goes on to say that even if we were to praise the Lord and exalt Him daily until the time of the arrival of the Messiah, what could we possibly contribute to G'd's greatness, seeing that it cannot be explored and researched, i.e. *eyn cheker*.

4. All that we can do is to instruct generation after generation to praise Your works and to proclaim Your mighty deeds.

Man can relate only to what G'd has revealed, to the evidence before his eyes, not to the inner workings of the Divine Spirit which has caused the manifestations which we perceive.

5. I am afraid to penetrate into the mysteries of the story of creation. Our sages have explained (in Bereshit Rabbah 3,4 as well

קמה א תְּהִלָּה לְדָוִד אֲרוֹמִמְךָ אֱלוֹהַי הַמֶּלֶךְ וַאֲבָרְכָה שִׁמְךָ
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:
ב בְּכָל-יוֹם אֲבָרְכֶךָּ וַאֲהַלְלָה שִׁמְךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:
ג גָּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד וְלִגְדֻלָּתוֹ אֵין חֵקֶר:
ד דּוֹר לְדוֹר יְשַׁבַּח מַעֲשֶׂיךָ וּגְבוּרֹתֶיךָ יַגִּידוּ:
ה הֲדַר כְּבוֹד הוֹדֶךָ וְדִבְרֵי נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ אָשִׂיחָה:
ו וֶעֱזוּז נוֹרְאוֹתֶיךָ יֹאמֵרוּ וּגְדֻלָּתְךָ אֲסַפְּרֶנָּה:

as in Vayikra Rabbah 31,6) that G'd had draped Himself in 10 layers of clothing when He commenced to create the universe. The Psalmist refers to this by *hadar kevod hodecha*, the beauty of the glory of Your majesty. These are all terms denoting G'd's need to make a gradual transition from the purely abstract, spiritual, to the material, physical. *Hod* is the mantle that enabled the transition to the *or*, original light which G'd created on the first day. In Psalm 104,2, referring to the line *osseh or kasalmah*, He makes light like an outer garment, we have explained that the light acted like a garment behind which the Essence of G'd could hide, so to speak.

Proverbs 25,2 refers to the above as *kevod Elokim – hasster davar*, the glory of G'd is a hidden matter. On the other hand, *kevod melachim chakor davar*, the glory of kings is subject to investigation.

The Psalmist merely says that concerning all the stages of creation prior to *vayechullu hashamayim ve-ha-aretz* (Genesis 2,1) heaven and earth had been completed, *assicha*, I will relate the facts as stated, without indulging in any investigation into how these things came to be.

6. Not only will each generation proclaim Your greatness by referring to Your acts of creation, but they will also speak about Your awesome acts, i.e. the miracles You have performed in Egypt. They will also relate that as corollary of these awesome acts, Your performed great deeds, i.e. direct benefits to the Israelites. If for instance, the Egyptians had to buy water at inflated prices from the Israelites during the seven days the plague of blood lasted, this was an act of Your awesome deeds. The fact is that G'd combined acts of kindness to Israel with acts of retribution to Israel's tormenters.

7. *Rav tuvcha*, manifold are Your good facets, refers to the 13 attributes revealed to Moses in Parshat Ki Tissa (Exodus 33,19 and 34,6–7) when G'd said to Moses "I will let all My goodness parade before You" and revealed to him that mention of His 13 attributes (on

[8]*The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in kindness.*
[9]*The LORD is good to all, and His mercy is upon all His works.*
[10]*All Your works shall praise You, O LORD, and Your faithful ones shall bless You.*
[11]*They shall talk of the majesty of Your kingship, and speak of Your might,*
[12]*to make His mighty acts known among men and the majestic glory of His kingship.*
[13]*Your kingship is an eternal kingship; Your dominion is for all generations.*
[14]*The LORD supports all who stumble, and makes all who are bent stand straight.*

a selective basis) would ensure that pleas to Him would not go unanswered. (Rosh Hashanah 17) Generation after generation will pass on this covenant. They will therefore jubilantly exalt Your generosity in judgment, *tzidkatcha*.

8. Moreover, they will not only exalt You for Your righteousness, i.e. for instances when Israel has some merit to base its entreaties on, when Your contribution is mainly not to offset their merits against what You do for them. Rather, even when Israel has no merit and relies totally on *rachum ve-chanun* that You G'd are merciful and gracious, will they exalt You. (Berachot 7)

Another advantage G'd grants is His *erech apayim*, that G'd's patience does not only extend to the righteous, (Eyruvin 22) but also to the wicked. He does NOT punish immediately a sin has been committed.

This is what David refers to here as *erech apayim u-gedol chessed*, slow to anger and great in loving kindness.

9. G'd is also good to the *resha-im*, wicked, i.e. *lakol* to everyone.

Even though their actions are an obstacle to *tov*, the Psalmist says *verachamav al kol ma-assav*, that man is sometimes helped because of the beasts. (Psalm 36,77) (compare Bereshit Rabbah 33,1 and Vayikra Rabbah 27,1)

10. The reason is that ALL G'd's creatures express their gratitude to G'd (compare perek Shirah) each in their own way. Even in a generation when the wicked far outweigh the righteous, He keeps in mind the fact that the pious who will descend from the wicked will exalt Him in due course.

11. The subject matter is still the great acts of G'd which

ז זֵכֶר רַב-טוּבְךָ יַבִּיעוּ וְצִדְקָתְךָ יְרַנֵּנוּ׃
ח חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם יְהוָה אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וּגְדָל-חָסֶד׃
ט טוֹב-יְהוָה לַכֹּל וְרַחֲמָיו עַל-כָּל-מַעֲשָׂיו׃
י יוֹדוּךָ יְהוָה כָּל-מַעֲשֶׂיךָ וַחֲסִידֶיךָ יְבָרְכוּכָה׃
יא כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתְךָ יֹאמֵרוּ וּגְבוּרָתְךָ יְדַבֵּרוּ׃
יב לְהוֹדִיעַ לִבְנֵי הָאָדָם גְּבוּרֹתָיו וּכְבוֹד הֲדַר מַלְכוּתוֹ׃
יג מַלְכוּתְךָ מַלְכוּת כָּל-עֹלָמִים וּמֶמְשַׁלְתְּךָ בְּכָל-דּוֹר וָדֹר׃
יד סוֹמֵךְ יְהוָה לְכָל-הַנֹּפְלִים וְזוֹקֵף לְכָל-הַכְּפוּפִים׃

generation after generation will talk about, as in verse 6. By doing so, they communicate *kevod malchutcha*, the glory of Your kingdom, and they do this by telling of Your mighty deeds.

12. However, this is the WRONG sequence. First they should tell people about G'd's mighty deeds, and subsequently about the glory of His kingdom. By only stating that His kingdom is glorious, people are left in doubt about G'd's claim to such glory until they have heard about *gevurotav*, His mighty deeds.

13. An essential element of the glory of G'd's kingdom is that it embraces all worlds, i.e. the celestial regions as well as earth and the galaxies; also it endures for all generations. This in contrast to the belief of Nebuchadnezzar, who thought that since Israel had sinned against G'd and He had allowed His temple to be destroyed, – this marked the end of G'd's direct involvement in the affairs of man. He thought that henceforth G'd had delegated His precious *hashgachah*, personal supervision of what goes on in our world, to the kings of the gentile nations.

Until G'd disciplined Nebuchadnezzar, he had remained under this misconception, as we have pointed out in our commentary on the book of Daniel.

The words *be-chol dor vador*, instead of *be-chol dorotav*, in all his generations, indicate that regardless of whether the generation merits it or not, G'd's kingdom's sovereignty continues. The word *dor* the first time is spelled plene, i.e. with the letter *vav*, whereas the second time it is spelled defective, without the letter *vav*. This hints at the lack of merit of such a generation.

14. When people observe how G'd tolerates that nations make sport of what used to be the site of the holy sanctuary, they will

15The eyes of all look to You expectantly, and You give them their food when it is due.
16You give it openhandedly, feeding every creature to its heart's content.
17The LORD is beneficent in all His ways and faithful in all His works.
18The LORD is near to all who call Him, to all who call Him with sincerity.

wonder how G'd's continued *hashgachah* manifests itself, seeing that the visible signs of the Presence of G'd's *Shechinah* are no longer?

In answer to this, the Psalmist says *somech hashem lechol hanoflim, vezokef lechol hake-fufim*, He will support all the falling, and prop upright all that are bent over. At the time of the destruction of the temple, Israel comprised two categories of people. The first group were the *noflim*, those who fell, i.e. deserved death; the second group are the *kefufim*, the ones who deserve exile, i.e. are to bend over like slaves.

G'd in His great mercy wanted to grant the *noflim* a continued limited tenure on *eretz Yisrael*, – therefore, instead of killing them, He subjected the earth itself to destruction. In this way *somech*, He gave support to all those who themselves had been guilty of death.

Concerning the second group, G'd vented His anger on the trees and the stones in the holy land, setting them to the torch. So we see that the very fact that the gentiles are deporting themselves in Zion as conquerors, is an act of G'd's well meaning *hashgachah*, the way in which He supports US and helps US to become upright, instead of lowly salves of the Babylonians.

Rashi explains the ABSENCE of the letter *nun* in the alphabetical sequence of the hymn as a hint that, once fallen i.e. *noflu*, there could never have been a *tekumah*, recovery.

The Zohar elaborates that someone who has suffered *nefilah*, could not recover BY HIS OWN EFFORT, only with the help of G'd; hence the line with the letter *nun* is missing, to show that G'd has to provide *semichah*, support.

15. Since our experience seems to contradict what we have just said in verse 14, i.e. we see plenty of Jews who are downtrodden and unable to recover, who are destitute, where then is the assistance of G'd? – The Psalmist adds *eyney kol elecha yesaberu*, if we look towards G'd for ALL our needs, not just for our material needs, for bread alone, – then, and ONLY THEN You will give them also their physical needs, i.e. their bread at the right time, *be-itto*.

טו עֵינֵי כֹל אֵלֶיךָ יְשַׂבֵּרוּ וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן-לָהֶם אֶת-אָכְלָם
בְּעִתּוֹ:
טז פּוֹתֵחַ אֶת-יָדֶךָ וּמַשְׂבִּיעַ לְכָל-חַי רָצוֹן:
יז צַדִּיק יְהוָה בְּכָל-דְּרָכָיו וְחָסִיד בְּכָל-מַעֲשָׂיו:
יח קָרוֹב יְהוָה לְכָל-קֹרְאָיו לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאֻהוּ בֶּאֱמֶת:

In other words, when man does his part concerning his relationship with his Creator, G'd can be relied on to provide adequately. We have explained this in Psalm 63,2 on the verse *tzamah nafshi*, my soul thirsts.

In that verse the reference to *nafshi* my soul was unnecessary, the words *besari koma lach*, "my flesh longs for You in a barren land", would have sufficed. However, when You cleave to Me although the land offers no succour, i.e. *eretz tziyah ve-ayef beli mayim*, and you do not worry about the physical discomforts – G'd will do His share.

16. Because they all look toward You full of expectations, i.e. *yesaberu*, to cleave to You, You open Your hand and satiate every righteous person. The *tzaddik* is called *chay ratzon*, because it is his wish to cleave to the "Living One". Clearly, this refers to the *tzaddik's* desire of spiritual fulfilment, because greed of an earthly nature can never be satiated, zi *massbiah*.

17. If nonetheless we observe *tzaddik vera lo*, that the righteous person is often in dire straits, whereas *rasha vetov lo*, the apparently wicked seems to be very comfortable, – do not be surprised, says the Psalmist.

In that event, G'd obviously repays the wicked for some good he has done in this world, – whereas He exacts the penalty for the few misdemeanours of the righteous while he is on earth, so as not to diminish his share in the hereafter.

The Psalmist therefore emphasizes that G'd "is righteous in ALL His ways".

He has engaged in doing good ever since He CREATED the universe based on *chessed*, loving kindness i.e. *olam chessed yibaneh* (Psalm 89,3).

18. The beginning of this verse, speaking about *le-chol kor-av* to all who call upon Him, seems to contradict the latter half, i.e. "those who call on Him in truth", i.e. that He is not close to everybody. If the second half of the verse were merely an explanation of the first half, it should have said *ka-asher yikre-uhu* when they call upon Him in truth.

19 *He fulfills the wishes of those who fear Him; He hears their cry and delivers them.*
20 *The LORD watches over all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy.*
21 *My mouth shall utter the praise of the LORD, and all creatures shall bless His holy name forever and ever.*

146 *Hallelujah.*
Praise the LORD, O my soul!

However, the second half of the verse offers an additional reason why G'd seems to treat the *rasha*, wicked person, well on occasions.

When all of Israel calls upon G'd, i.e. for help, and only a few amongst them are NOT deserving, we should not feel that we rather forego G'd's help than see the sinner also benefit by the help G'd extends to us, who may have some claim to such help.

It is G'd's way to be close, i.e. responsive to the whole nation when all call upon Him in truth – even if some were not sincere in their prayer, since most of the worshippers are sincere.

19. Our sages say that the matriarchs/patriarchs (Sarah, Rebeccah, Rachel, Abraham) were barren by nature, because G'd WANTED them to pray to Him. (Yevamot 64) Possibly, the Psalmist expresses the same thought in this verse.

In verse 16 he had said that G'd provides generously for the *tzaddik*, i.e. *chay ratzon*, without the *tzaddik* needing to pray, that it suffices for the *tzaddik* to express *ratzon* his wish.

After that, the Psalmist says that G'd is close to "those who call upon Him", which implies that there is the need to pray to G'd and that mere *ratzon* i.e. the wish, is NOT sufficient.

Now the Psalmist explains that it is true that G'd will comply with the mere *ratzon* of those who qualify as *yerey-av*, those who revere Him, – but that He likes, or wishes to hear their prayers expressed. Hence *ve-et shav-atam yishma ve-yoshiem*, when He hears their pleas He will help them.

20. The Talmud records that when Rabbi Chiyah and his sons prayed together, while they still mentioned the various attributes of G'd, i.e. His *gevuratav*, His power over wind and rain, the rains would come and the wind would blow. (Baba Metzia 85)

The fact is that had they not prayed in unison, the prayer of each one individually would not have been sufficient to produce such effect immediately.

יט רְצוֹן-יְרֵאָיו יַעֲשֶׂה וְאֶת-שַׁוְעָתָם יִשְׁמַע וְיוֹשִׁיעֵם:
כ שׁוֹמֵר יְהוָה אֶת-כָּל-אֹהֲבָיו וְאֵת כָּל-הָרְשָׁעִים
יַשְׁמִיד:
כא תְּהִלַּת יְהוָה יְדַבֶּר-פִּי וִיבָרֵךְ כָּל-בָּשָׂר שֵׁם קָדְשׁוֹ
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

קמו

א הַלְלוּיָהּ הַלְלִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת-יְהוָה:

The Psalmist therefore emphasizes that G'd responds to collective prayer i.e. *shav-atam*!. This is so at a time when the world contains many wicked people, whose sins act as an impediment to the outpourings of G'd's generosity to man. When the righteous are in the minority, we all suffer from the shortcomings of the generation. However, when the time comes when G'd preserves i.e. *shomer* all those who love Him, and destroys the wicked, i.e. in the messiania era.

21. Then all I need to do is proclaim the praise *gevurot* of the Lord. I will no longer need to plead for my needs. I will not need collective prayer like Rabbi Chiyah and his sons, but *u-varech kol bassar shem kodsho* "all flesh will bless His holy name" for responding to our needs immediately. This is because at that time G'd will DO the WILL of his *yerey-av*, not needing their *sha-avah*, pleas.

Psalm 146

1. To the multitude, the Psalmist says "Praise the 2 lettered name of G'd (i.e. *yud-heh*). He indicates that they do not yet merit to praise G'd by invoking His 4 lettered name (tetragram). G'd had sworn on your account that He does not want to be praised with His 4 lettered name as long as Amalek still exists, and he battles those forces. (compare Exodus 17,16)

However, "my soul" i.e. *nafshi* the soul of Adam who had called G'd by His 4 lettered name when He first identified Him in *Gan Eden*, can praise You by Your 4 lettered name. (compare Midrash hagadol on Genesis 2,19, explaining Isaiah 42,8)

2. However, my BODY does not deserve to praise You by Your 4 lettered name until I will ACT as the Messiah. Then I will praise the 4 lettered name *bechayay*, when my life is really my own, not like now

2I will praise the LORD all my life, sing hymns to my God while I exist.
3Put not your trust in the great, in mortal man who cannot save.
4His breath departs; he returns to the dust; on that day his plans come to nothing.
5Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God,
6maker of heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever;

when my life is only a loan from Adam and the patriarchs, as the Zohar had explained. At this time however, i.e. *be-odi*, I will sing only to the manifestation of the *Shechinah* as is, *azamrah leylokay be-odi*.

,3. I have told you to praise the name *yud heh* already now, as if He had already brought the redemption. In other words, the major reason you are to praise the Lord is for the *ge-ulah*, for enduring favours, not for the good experienced as part of this transient life we live on this earth. It follows that "you must not put your trust in noble men, inasmuch as they are only *beney adam*, human, themselves in need of salvation". Do not therefore, throw the burden of providing your livelihood on the leading citizen, *nedivim*, but concentrate all your expectations, your trust, on the One who will provide in the future.

4. The reason is, that also the *nediv*, noble citizen, does not cleave to G'd sufficiently to ensure that he will continuously be able to provide your needs generously. The very fact that he is wealthy tends to make him forget his mortality, and to concentrate his own plans on THIS life, building palaces etc. He will not become seriously aware of his mortality till the day of his death arrives, i.e. his spirit departs and his body returns to the soil. Only then will he abandon all his plans, which focused on earthly values. How then, could you make a human being the kingpin of your hopes for charity?

5. Before explaining this verse, we want to refer to our commentary on Genesis 28,21. "And when I return safely to my father's house etc." Jacob had said to G'd that He had not described Himself as the G'd of Abraham until the latter had been died. Whereas G'd had been described as the G'd of Isaac while Isaac had been alive, this had been after Isaac had become blind, and therefore had lost his vulnerability to the evil urge. He had been like dead. He, Jacob, asks that G'd should associate His name with him while he is

ג אַהַלְלָה יְהוָה בְּחַיָּי אֲזַמְּרָה לֵאלֹהַי בְּעוֹדִי:
ד אַל-תִּבְטְחוּ בִנְדִיבִים בְּבֶן-אָדָם שֶׁאֵין לוֹ תְּשׁוּעָה:
ה תֵּצֵא רוּחוֹ יָשֹׁב לְאַדְמָתוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אָבְדוּ עְשְׁתֹּנֹתָיו:
ו אַשְׁרֵי שֶׁאֵל יַעֲקֹב בְּעֶזְרוֹ שִׂבְרוֹ עַל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו:
ז עֹשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ אֶת-הַיָּם וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-בָּם הַשֹּׁמֵר אֱמֶת לְעוֹלָם:

in full possession of all his faculties, since his sole interest in this world is the provision of the bare essentials for survival, i.e. "bread to eat and clothes to wear".

Because of this, he hopes to merit return to his father healthy in body, since he can be considered as having abandoned *olam hazeh*, the present transient life. Nonetheless, he hopes that G'd will see fit to associate His name with him, i.e. *ve-hayah hashem li le-lokim*, I will be able to call G'd "my G'd".

Indeed, his prayer was answered, since we read in Genesis 33,18 "Jacob arrived in Shechem *sholem*", i.e. healthy in body, not blind, not dead like; *shalem*, economically intact, not poor, i.e. insignificant like the dead; still (verse 20) when he built the altar G'd called him *el*, i.e. G'd like, not just a human being, but a being fit for G'd to associate with. G'd applied His own name to Jacob, and became *elokey Yisrael*, the G'd whom Israel could call his very own.

The Psalmist is saying here "did I not tell you not to rely on even highly placed human beings for your sustenance", neither to demand excess material blessings; for "hail to the G'd like Jacob" who only asked for bread to eat and clothes to wear as His help. His whole *sivrau*, expectation was only to return safely to his father's house and to deserve to have G'd associate His name with his own.

6. Emulate his (Jacob's) model. He had not wanted to enjoy the attractions of this life, even though he could have been considered as the one who had fashioned heaven, earth and the oceans including their contents.

Our sages (Vayikra Rabbah 36,4) say concerning Isaiah 43,1 "and now says the Lord, Jacob has created you, Israel has fashioned you". Rabbi Pinchas is quoted by the Midrash as saying that G'd addresses His universe, saying "tell me world, who has created you? who has fashioned you? Jacob has created you, Jacob has fashioned you". The meaning is that though the universe was created only for the

7who secures justice for those who are wronged, gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets prisoners free;
8The LORD restores sight to the blind; the LORD makes those who are bent stand straight; the LORD loves the righteous;
9The LORD watches over the stranger; He gives courage to the orphan and widow, but makes the path of the wicked tortuous.

sake of Jacob/Israel, he declined to make use of it for his personal enjoyment.

Should you ask why Jacob did so, why did he not want to reap the reward in this life? The reason is that *shomer emet le-olam*, he did not want to consume something that is not *emet*, true, enduring in this transient world, but wanted to keep it for *le-olam* for the hereafter when G'd would add the dividend of his merits to the capital he had already accumulated.

We have explained this concept in our commentary on Proverbs 8,21, "to let those who love Him, inherit something of substance".

Our sages (Bereshit Rabbah 84,1 and Rashi on Genesis 37,2) stated that "when Jacob once wanted to live in serenity, – G'd said "are the righteous not satisfied with what I have prepared for them in the hereafter, that they want to consume their dividend in this life?" If they do so, – they would deprive themselves of some of their eternal reward". To avoid this, Jacob had to experience the troubles with Joseph, etc.

7. Having asked all of Israel to praise the 2 lettered name of G'd for the impending redemption as if that redemption had already taken place, David answers the unspoken question "meanwhile, how do we get through this exile, when our patriarchs' merits no longer protect us, when we are like orphans, when Zion itself is like a widow?"

The Psalmist reminds Israel that G'd is the G'd of justice, who performs justice on behalf of the *ashukim*, those whose rights have been infringed on.

Although Joseph was NO orphan, had the merit of his father to protect him, this did NOT save him from being sold into slavery because he had slandered his brothers. Because he had called his brothers slaves, (in his dream), he himself was sold into slavery. Because he had accused them of eating flesh from a living animal, the brothers slaughtered a he goat and dunked his coat in its blood. Because he had told his father that his brothers were lusting after

ז עֹשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט לַעֲשׁוּקִים נֹתֵן לֶחֶם לָרְעֵבִים יְהוָה
מַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים:
ח יְהוָה פֹּקֵחַ עִוְרִים יְהוָה זֹקֵף כְּפוּפִים יְהוָה אֹהֵב
צַדִּיקִים:
ט יְהוָה שֹׁמֵר אֶת-גֵּרִים יָתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה יְעוֹדֵד וְדֶרֶךְ
רְשָׁעִים יְעַוֵּת:

the local women, the wife of Potiphar tried to seduce him. This is G'd in action on behalf of the *ashukim*.

Later, – He, G'd saw to it that Joseph gave bread to the hungry, i.e. to Jacob and his clan. All this demonstrates that G'd accomplished many objectives in a single stroke. By looking after the brothers' justice i.e. the sale of Joseph, He gave bread to the hungry at a later stage and also freed prisoners i.e. the chief butler spoke up when Pharaoh needed an interpreter for his dream, thus causing Joseph to be freed from prison. (All of this in Genesis chapters 37–42)

8. G'd opens the eyes of the blind, i.e. He opened Jacob's eyes for him to bless his sons, after the Torah had already described Jacob's eyes as "Israel's eyes were heavy from old age, and he could not see". (Genesis 48,10)

2 lines later, Jacob acknowledges "here G'd has shown me not only you but also your children". The meaning, as we have explained in our commentary on the Torah was, that G'd showed Jacob that the *tzelem elokim*, the image of G'd was reflected on the faces of Ephrayim and Menasseh.

Later after Jacob's death, when the brothers were afraid that he might hate them, and they were ashamed and bowed down, – G'd made them stand upright again when He put words of comfort in the mouth of Joseph. (Genesis 50,19–21)

Still later, G'd proved His love for the righteous, by deferring the beginning of exile until the last of Joseph's brothers had died. (Exodus 1,6)

9. After that, when Israel had become orphaned and stranger like in Egypt, no longer righteous, G'd looked after the strangers. Our sages all attribute Israel's eventual redemption to G'd protecting them against such sins as sexual licentiousness (very prevalent in Egypt), as well as 4 positive merits such as retention of their Jewish names, their Hebrew tongue, their traditional mode of dress, as well as their refraining from evil gossip. (different Midrashim cite different versions

10*The LORD shall reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.*
Hallelujah.

147 *Hallelujah.*
It is good to chant hymns to our God; it is pleasant to sing glorious praise.
2*The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem; He gathers in the exiles of Israel.*
3*He heals their broken hearts, and binds up their wounds.*

of the 4 merits. compare in anthologies commencing with the words *bi-zechut arba-ah devarim*)

Had the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence not been in Egypt with them, they would not have been redeemed, since they would have assimilated also in those areas just outlined.

David says "after I have explained all this to you, know that G'd does all these things". Therefore, also the orphan and the widow that you have spoken of, He will lend strength to to endure, i.e. *ye-oded*. Should you express fear that the wicked amongst you may jeopardize the redemption, David says "Do not fear, He will cause the way of the wicked to become crooked". This means that G'd will make crooked the path of the erstwhile *resha-im*, sinners, so that they will become *ba-aley teshuvah*, repentant sinners. This will occur because they see no future in their former *derech resha-im*, wicked path. (a double negative equals a positive)

10. Another great guarantee that you can be sure to experience redemption, is the fact that THEN G'd WILL be king. When G'd had not yet created the universe, *hashem malach*, He had ruled. Since He has created it, *hashem melech* G'd has become king. However, only at the time of the redemption can He be said to *hashem yimloch le-olam va-ed*, to remain king and rule forever more.

Since this trilogy of G'd's stature MUST be fulfilled, – redemption is the guaranteed prerequisite.

Another assurance of eventual redemption is the fact that the *Shechinah* never COMPLETELY departed from the Western Wall. This was ONLY to serve as a beacon of hope to us that we would one day return to the sanctuary He rebuilds when He redeems us, *elokayich tziyon ledor vador*.

We have explained on Psalm 87,3 "Zion will ALWAYS remain G'd's city", *ir elokim selah*, that this means even after the *churban*,

י יִמְלֹךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם אֱלֹהַיִךְ צִיּוֹן לְדֹר וָדֹר הַלְלוּיָהּ:

קמז א הַלְלוּיָהּ כִּי-טוֹב זַמְּרָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כִּי-נָעִים נָאוָה תְהִלָּה:
ב בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלִַם יְהוָה נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְכַנֵּס:
ג הָרוֹפֵא לִשְׁבוּרֵי לֵב וּמְחַבֵּשׁ לְעַצְּבוֹתָם:

destruction of the temple. Therefore, it is incumbent upon you to give praise to G'd already NOW for the redemption in the future when His fight against Amalek will be concluded.

Psalm 147

1. At the end of the last hymn, David had said that we are certain of eventual redemption, that G'd grants the ability to endure to the orphan and to the widow, and that at that time He will rule as king forever more. Therefore, it is proper to praise Him. Israel would conclude from this that G'd is to be praised ONLY for the redemption – as and when, – but that G'd is NOT to be praised for the debilitating exile we are experiencing.

To correct such an impression, the Psalmist says "it is good to sing to our Lord", i.e. to the attribute of justice, *elokeynu*, who has placed us in exile, since He is pleasant to us, does good for us, and hence praise is appropriate, seemly.

2. Had we NOT been placed in exile, we would not have merited the process of G'd rebuilding spiritual Jerusalem, personally gathering in the exiles. G'd had said in Zachariah 2,9 that He would rebuild Jerusalem surrounding it with a wall of fire, placing us the outcasts within those walls. Only a Jerusalem built by G'd Himself is capable of accommodating all the *nidchey Yisrael*, the outcasts of Israel.

3. The reason we can describe G'd as being good to the exiles is, because He is the healer of broken hearts, i.e. the ones whose hearts have been broken by the *yetzer hara*, the evil urge. Man is equipped with *levav* a dual heart, one of which tends to flirt with the evil urge. This "heart" breaks man when leading him into sin. G'd, by means of exile, heals His people from their "broken heart" condition by humbling the people so that they return to G'd.

When that point is reached, *mechabesh le-atzvotam*, He bandages its wounds sustained while subservient to other nations.

According to Ibn Ezra, who understands the word *atzav* as *nega Tzora-at*, like plague, we must understand *mechabesh le-atzvotam*

4He reckoned the number of the stars; to each He gave its name.
5Great is our LORD and full of power; His wisdom is beyond reckoning.
6The LORD gives courage to the lowly, and brings the wicked down to the dust.
7Sing to the LORD a song of praise, chant a hymn with a lyre to our God,
8who covers the heavens with clouds, provides rain for the earth, makes mountains put forth grass;

to mean that G'd will provide a cure for those afflictions by means of the priest, the *kohen*. Just as the *kohen*, by quarantining the afflicted, i.e. *me-nuga* humbles him, which in turn leads to his rehabilitation, G'd subsequently "bandages" him through a purifying process, changing the colour of his skin etc.

David says "did I not tell you that the humbling experience of exile ennobles you, since by means of it you merit the experience of Jerusalem being rebuilt?!" Our verse then is an allegorical description of the whole exile/redemption process. You have every reason to praise the Lord therefore ALSO for the *galut*, exile experience, although it is a manifestatioh of the *midat hadin*, the attribute of justice, viz. *elokeynu*.

4. You might query how you can be sure of redemption, since G'd has assigned fixed orbits *moneh misspar* to the 7 planets which are the basic *mazzalot*, horoscopic influences, and that He has assigned to each a specific function in the fate governing influences by naming each one individually, such as Venus, Mars, etc.

If, for instance, the time of redemption was pre-programmed for the month of Av, – using the horoscopic constellations, – how is G'd doing us a favour when such time arrives and with it redemption? To such arguments the Psalmist replies; "although G'd has assigned a task to each planet, i.e. *moneh mispar lakochavim*, nevertheless *lechulam shemot*, each one is treated on an individual basis, i.e. *shemot yikra*, He can adjust their orbits and what these orbits presage in accordance with judgment pronounced by Him.

5. Do not assume that because G'd in His perfect knowledge of future events has programmed the entire range of stellar motions to coincide with a predetermined date for redemption, that nothing can be adjusted.

G'd has made an arrangement with the stars at the time He put them into orbit, that when He demands it, they will accommodate

ד מוֹנֶה מִסְפָּר לַכּוֹכָבִים לְכֻלָּם שֵׁמוֹת יִקְרָא:
ה גָּדוֹל אֲדוֹנֵינוּ וְרַב-כֹּחַ לִתְבוּנָתוֹ אֵין מִסְפָּר:
ו מְעוֹדֵד עֲנָוִים יְהוָה מַשְׁפִּיל רְשָׁעִים עֲדֵי-אָרֶץ:
ז עֱנוּ לַיהוָה בְּתוֹדָה זַמְּרוּ לֵאלֹהֵינוּ בְכִנּוֹר:
ח הַמְכַסֶּה שָׁמַיִם בְּעָבִים הַמֵּכִין לָאָרֶץ מָטָר הַמַּצְמִיחַ הָרִים חָצִיר:

their orbits to His instructions for the sake of Israel, i.e. NOT LIKE *eyn mispar*, which would mean "no allowance for special circumstances". (Bereshit Rabbah 8,4)

6. The proof that horoscopically inspired events are NOT meaningful for Israel, lies in the fact that G'd has made the meek endure though they were lowly, and that He has humbled the exalted to the very ground. Examples are what happened to the Egyptians and the Israelites, whose positions were suddenly reversed. There are numerous similar examples in history. If all these events had been due to horoscopic influences, those changes would have occurred gradually, in accordance with the motion of the planets.

The Psalmist perhaps emphasizes that though horoscopically, Egypt's *mazzal* was in the ascendancy at the time of the Exodus, and the Jewish *mazzal* was on the decline, you can see from what happened that it was the reverse of horoscopically inspired events.

Even Pharaoh had perceived of his *mazzal* being in the ascendancy and that of the Israelites on the decline. (compare Exodus 10,10 and the Midrash Aggadah quoted by Rashi)

7. At any rate, sing to the Lord in thanksgiving, i.e. to the attribute of mercy, *hashem*; sing to the *midat hadin*, attribute of justice with the harp! When G'd employs the quality of mercy, sing with your mouth, express your thanks verbally! But sing with the accompaniment of musical instruments when He exercises His quality of justice – since it has the effect of helping you to regenerate yourself.

8. See how all is due to *hashgachah*! In order for people to realize that G'd does supervise events, He has done three things. 1)He covers the sky with thick clouds. Why does He do so, instead of relying on the natural vapours and dew rising and watering the ground WITHOUT it first rising to the sky only to descend again as rain?

2)Why did He institute rain altogether, instead of having earth be

9who gives the beasts their food, to the raven's brood what they cry for.
10He does not prize the strength of horses, nor value the fleetness of men;
11but the LORD values those who fear Him, those who depend on His faithful care.
12O Jerusalem, glorify the LORD; praise your God, O Zion!

irrigated through a system of canals and rivers (as in Egypt for instance)? i.e. *ha-meychin la-aretz matar*!

3)Why does He make man undergo the toil of ploughing, sowing and all the other labours a farmer needs to engage in, in order to produce bread? Why are we human beings at a disadvantage vis a vis the beasts who find their food supply ready to eat? i.e. *matzmiach harim chatzir* they are able to find the grass they need even on the mountains!

9. He gives the beasts their "bread" without effort on their part, and the young raven who calls to G'd (because their parents have abandoned them) G'd provides with worms secreted from their excrement. (compare Rashi)

10. He does not even let the powerful horse have to work for its food, but it too like the naturally weak creatures finds its needs readily available. Why then does G'd not want to save man's thighs *shokey ha-ish yirtzeh*, to provide for him without man having to extend himself?

11. The truth is that man has to labour for his food BECAUSE G'd loves those who revere Him, and not those wo do not revere Him. Animals, which do not sin find their food readily available. Man who is prone to sin, has his food supply withheld. This is in accordance with the statement in the Talmud (Kiddushin 82) "I have never seen a lion carry loads, a deer act as watchman, or a fox engage in business; still they all find their food supply effortlessly".

If man is subjected to all these difficulties, it is to teach him to look towards G'd, trust in Him etc. This is what the Psalmist means by *rotze Hashem et yereyov.*

Concerning the first two items, i.e. covering the sky with thick clouds, and the institution of rain instead of dew, the Psalmist says "so that they will wait anxiously for His kindness", so that man will train his eyes heavenwards. He needs to hope that these clouds will not move on but turn into rain over his fields.

David had experienced 3 years without rain, and people had

ט נוֹתֵן לִבְהֵמָה לַחְמָהּ לִבְנֵי עֹרֵב אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאוּ׃
י לֹא בִגְבוּרַת הַסּוּס יֶחְפָּץ לֹא-בְשׁוֹקֵי הָאִישׁ יִרְצֶה׃
יא רוֹצֶה יְהוָה אֶת-יְרֵאָיו אֶת-הַמְיַחֲלִים לְחַסְדּוֹ׃
יב שַׁבְּחִי יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶת-יְהוָה הַלְלִי אֱלֹהַיִךְ צִיּוֹן׃

thought that this had been due to lack of charitability on their part (Proverbs 25,14) "that man boasted of donations pledged, but not given".

The same reasoning is behind not providing irrigation through a system of rivers and canals. (Although the Talmud in Kiddushin also cites Israel's topography as a reason for the need to provide irrigation by means of rain, that is not the PRINCIPAL reason.)

12. Earlier, the Psalmist spoke of *boneh yerushalayim*, that G'd rebuilds spiritual Jerusalem (verse 2) with His own hands, and that He will bring the banished Jews back into it, something that could not be realized if the rebuilding of Jerusalem would be merely a secular accomplishment. Jerusalem then would simply not be able to accommodate all the Jews who will merit re-surrection.

The Psalmist now resumes that theme by saying "do not be amazed at how a material entity such as the city of Jerusalem can be turned into "spiritual dust"? At least, – how can I use terminology i.e. direct speech applicable to living creatures, when I am describing spiritual matters, and how can I speak to inert matter as if it were a living creature?

Since Jerusalem is one of three things in the world which qualifies to be called by the same name as G'd, it is possible. (compare Ezekiel 48,35, last verse of the book) "the name of the city henceforth will be "G'd is there". Instead of reading *shamah*, there, read *she-mah*, is her name)

The Psalmist calls on Jerusalem to praise the Lord for this transformation implicit in G'd's promise in verse 2 to rebuild Jerusalem as a spiritual entity.

The same applies in even greater measure to Zion, which name has always represented the spiritual dimension of Jerusalem. This is why Zion has been referred to as *ir ha-elokim selah*, (Psalm 87,3) the city of G'd always, singled out by You G'd as special.

Since all our sages have always viewed *shamayim*, the heaven/sky as a domain which is the home of intelligent life, how much more so can Jerusalem once infused with *ruchniyut* spirituality, become fit to be addressed by the Psalmist directly, as if he were addressing human beings or G'd himself!

13For He made the bars of your gates strong, and blessed your children within you.
14He endows your realm with well-being, and satisfies you with choice wheat.
15He sends forth His word to the earth; His command runs swiftly.
16He lays down snow like fleece, scatters frost like ashes.

13. Since, we have a verse (Isaiah 60,11) "your gates will be open continuously, they shall not be shut day or night", how can the Psalmist talk about "the bolts of your gates" seeing they will never be used? However, we must understand the verse in Zachariah 2,9 "I will be for her a wall of fire all around" as meaning that this "wall of fire" will act as the *berichim*, the bolts on the gates of Jerusalem/Zion so that strangers, i.e. enemies cannot enter her.

Apparently, this wall of fire would heat up Jerusalem like a furnace. Therefore the Psalmist says, to reassure us that the 3 essentials of terrestrial life will all be maintained in Jerusalem. They are 1)life itself, i.e. health, 2)children, and 3)the chance to earn a livelihood.

Concerning the blessing of children, the Psalmist says "He strengthens the bolts of your gates", i.e. the very One who has made this wall bar enemies from entering the city, *beyrach banayich bekirbech* bestows blessing on your children within.

14. Concerning the second condition, life itself, health, the Psalmist says "He makes your borders peace", i.e. in the words of our sages on Numbers 25,12 "I give him my covenant peace", that this means life and peace. *Shalom* means whole in the sense that death does not separate body and soul. Death occurs only when the absence of peace separates body from soul. Such absence makes continued fusion between body and soul impossible to sustain. Only through refinement of the body can it become sufficiently compatible with the soul to be able to exist with it in a kind of fusion.

The Psalmist, i.e. G'd promises *hasam gevulech shalom*, you will enjoy freedom from death.

Concerning man's third requirement, *parnassah*, a livelihood, the Psalmist says *chelev chittim yasbi-ech*, He will satisfy you with the fat of the wheat.

In the whole area of Israel, i.e. 400 miles square, the quality of wheat will be such that it is cake like. Not only will there be no chaff, no need to mill, to knead a dough etc., the land's produce will be fit to eat AS IS.

This is not hard to believe in view of the fact that G'd made figs

יג כִּי-חִזַּק בְּרִיחֵי שְׁעָרָיִךְ בֵּרַךְ בָּנַיִךְ בְּקִרְבֵּךְ:
יד הַשָּׂם-גְּבוּלֵךְ שָׁלוֹם חֵלֶב חִטִּים יַשְׂבִּיעֵךְ:
טו הַשֹּׁלֵחַ אִמְרָתוֹ אָרֶץ עַד-מְהֵרָה יָרוּץ דְּבָרוֹ:
טז הַנֹּתֵן שֶׁלֶג כַּצָּמֶר כְּפוֹר כָּאֵפֶר יְפַזֵּר:

to be eaten as is, or apples etc. He can easily do the same with all foodstuffs. The need to prepare foodstuffs to make them edible and palatable was only due to man's sin and punishment, as we know from Genesis 3,18 and the Midrashim elaborating on that verse.

15. Concerning the statement in Avot chapter 5, that the universe was created by 10 Divine directives, we have explained this to mean that each ***ma-amar***, verbalized directive, was the creative process needed to make the subject of the directive materialize.

For instance, the breath of G'd uttering "let there be light", was equivalent to light coming into existence. Similarly, with all the other directives.

When the Psalmist says (Psalm 33,6) "and by the breath of His mouth – all their hosts", he also refers to the phenomenon of the world of angels being created. The prophet Isaiah 55,11, also has this in mind.

In short, we must NOT imagine the directives of G'd as only setting in motion a time consuming process which will eventually result in what G'd had commanded materializing. The reason the Psalmist tells us about the immediacy of G'd's orders being fulfilled, is to describe to us that His command for earth to produce ready made food need neither surprise us, – nor has His power to do so again when the circumstances are right, diminished.

16. So that we should not wonder how such things, emanating from the purely spiritual can materialize, the Psalmist says that the same G'd who can envelop the whole earth in snow, like a woolen blanket, i.e. who unifies, can also scatter hoary frost into little particles, ash like.

Just as we observed THAT with our own eyes, He provided the Mannah in the desert, which was hoary frost like particles, (Exodus 16,14), did NOT consist of a unified layer, but of innumerable tiny pellets like scattered ash. While Israel had been in the desert, this "frost" had to be turned into food, whereas in the future discussed by the Psalmist, they will drink this "frost" as water, seeing that food is readily available.

17He tosses down hail like crumbs— who can endure His icy cold?
18He issues a command—it melts them; He breathes—the waters flow.
19He issued His commands to Jacob, His statues and rules to Israel.
20He did not do so for any other nation; of such rules they know nothing.
Hallelujah.

148 *Hallelujah.*
Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise Him on high.

17. He flings His cold like *pittim* hard crumbs of breads, so cold that no one can stand it.

18. Then, – He sends His word and melts them, – i.e. they were too cold to have become tasty had they merely been melted by the sun. His *ruach* will blow and will cause them to flow like water. The *ruach* referred to is the *ruach devaro*, the spirit embodied in His word.

In other words, the sustenance of Israel in the future, in messianic times, will consist of *chelev chittim*, the fat solid parts of the wheat, supplemented by water descending from heaven in the form of hoary frost.

All this will be a daily occurrence, just like during the days of creation when G'd had created vegetation through an act of His mouth, immediately. (Genesis 1,11–12)

19. In addition, we Israel need to praise the Lord who has chosen US and taken US into His confidence, revealed all this to us through giving us His Torah to encourage us to cleave to Him.

Not only did He not do so *lechol hagoyim*, for any of the other nations, but on the contrary, when offering the Torah to the other nations, He presented Torah in unattractive colours, such as pointing out to the thieving Ishmaelites that the Torah enjoins theft. Or, He pointed out to the Edomites (descendants of Esau) who live by their sword, i.e. Isaac's blessing to Esau) that murder cannot be tolerated, and that they would have to forego their ancestral blessing if they accepted the Torah.

When presenting Torah to Israel however, G'd had been at pains to point out the positive aspects of Torah acceptance, such as when G'd described Himself as the G'd of our forefather Abraham, who had been promised that his seed would inherit the land of Canaan etc.

יז מַשְׁלִיךְ קַרְחוֹ כְּפִתִּים לִפְנֵי קָרָתוֹ מִי יַעֲמֹד:
יח יִשְׁלַח דְּבָרוֹ וְיַמְסֵם יַשֵּׁב רוּחוֹ יִזְלוּ-מָיִם:
יט מַגִּיד דְּבָרָו לְיַעֲקֹב חֻקָּיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו לְיִשְׂרָאֵל:
כ לֹא-עָשָׂה כֵן לְכָל-גּוֹי וּמִשְׁפָּטִים בַּל-יְדָעוּם הַלְלוּיָהּ:

קמח א הַלְלוּיָהּ הַלְלוּ אֶת-יְהוָה מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם הַלְלוּהוּ בַּמְּרוֹמִים:

plus that the whole of mankind would be blessed through Israel, and that, naturally, Israel would be free, unfettered.

Such promises had already begun to be fulfilled when Jacob, the founder of the nation had not been described as having died. (Genesis 49,33 commentary by Talmud Taanit 5) In other words, it had been demonstrated that freedom from the angel of death is possible.

20. He has done nothing like this for the gentiles. Though He revealed to them the laws He had reason to believe they would reject, He simultaneously withheld from them knowledge of the range of social laws *mishpatim*, which might have encouraged them to accept the Torah and the reward inherent in such acceptance.

Psalm 148

1. We need to understand why the Psalmist asks to praise the Lord *min hashamayim* from the heavens, i.e. *bamromim*, in the habitat of angels. Why does he have to repeat then that all His angels should praise Him? Besides, are not His angels identical with *kol tzeva-av*, all His hosts? What is meant by "praise Him *shemey hashamayim* the heaven of heaven", a domain beyond the galaxies, the domain of angels? Why would this have to be repeated then? Also, what is "the waters which are beyond the heavens praising G'd?"

Why does the Psalmist not say "He has SAID and they were created", instead of the unusual "He commanded and they were created"? Why are the "waters beyond the celestial regions" singled out for the term *tzivah venivra-u*, they were created by His command, did the same not apply to all of G'd's other creations? Why did the Psalmist have to mention that *vaya-amidem la-ad* G'd made them endure forever? Who had imagined otherwise?

[2]Praise Him, all His angels, praise Him, all His hosts.
[3]Praise Him, sun and moon, praise Him, all bright stars.

To gain an understanding of what is meant here, we need to recall the statement by Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish in the Talmud (Chagigah 12) "there are 7 *rekiyim*, heavens. They are called *vilon*, *rakiyah*, *shechakim*, *zevul*, *ma-on*, *machon* and *arvot*".

Vilon does not perform an independent function, it enters in the morning and exits in the evening, i.e. it allows the galaxies in the sky to become visible at night. *Rakiah* is the habitat of sun, moon and the stars. *Shechakim*, the domain in which mills grind the mannah for the use of the righteous in the *olam haba*, the post messianic era. *Zevul* – the domain containing celestial Jerusalem and the celestial counterpart of the sanctuary.

Ma-on, the domain of the angels who sing praises to G'd at night. *Machon*, the domain in which G'd keeps a reservoir of snow and hail. *Arvot* contains the reservois of energy and heavenly dew needed to effect the resurrection of the dead at the appropriate time.

The Talmud goes on to provide scriptural proof that all the 6 areas mentioned qualify for the name *rakia* in addition to *vilon*.

We have proved in our commentary on Psalms chapter 19, that the 7 fixed planets (a medieval concept since disproved) are NOT identical with the 7 *reki-im* mentioned by Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish in Chagigah 12, but that *galgalim*, planets in our terrestrial universe and *reki-im* are treated as separate phenomena in that Psalm.

Rather, the second heaven called *rakia*, includes ALL the *galgalim*, galaxies. That "heaven" consists of a refined kind of matter, not something abstract.

From *shechakim* outwards, all layers of "heaven" mentioned, are no part of the physical universe. This is where the domain of angels begins. Each successive layer of heaven is intensified spiritually.

The Psalmist says that though the inhabitants of all layers of heaven need to praise the Lord and do so, Israel is considered by G'd as greater than anyone else because they serve G'd both in the physical world and simultaneously have a presence in the spiritual world. Hence the Psalmist begins by inviting Israel to praise the 2 lettered name of G'd i.e. a reference to the 2 worlds G'd created with His 2 lettered name. (He created earth with the letter *heh* and heaven with the letter *yud*, as we have stated frequently.)

However, the Psalmist does not imply that all other beings need not praise G'd.

The *shamayim*, heaven is asked to praise the Lord using the

ב הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל-מַלְאָכָיו הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל-צְבָאָו׃
ג הַלְלוּהוּ שֶׁמֶשׁ וְיָרֵחַ הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל-כּוֹכְבֵי אוֹר׃

tetragram. Having established that "heaven" too has to praise the Lord, the Psalmist now goes into details.

The *meromim* (plural) refer to the 2 "uppermost" *reki-im*, i.e. *arvot* and *machon*. These correspond to the Divine attributes of *chessed* love, kindness and *gevurah*, strength, power.

Arvot contains the reservoir of life to be released at the time of *techiyat hameytim*, the resurrection of the dead, i.e. is an expression of *tzedakah*, something beyond justice, loving kindness. *Machon* on the other hand contains the store of snow and hail as well as destructive dews, storms, cyclones, etc. These *gevurot* forces, are proof of G'd's power, and between the powers contained in *machon* and the love contained in *arvot*, G'd's will is executed on earth.

Praise of G'd may either be due to gratitude for the acts of love experienced, – or to the sobering reminder of G'd's Presence and power triggered through the manifestations of hail, storms, etc., and the devastation caused by these forces.

2. Similarly, *ma-on*, which contains the angels singing G'd's praises and *zevul* which contains G'd's armies. (angels that are sent on missions, headed by the archangel Michael) This angel is perceived as offering sacrifices on the altar in the celestial sanctuary.

3. Since the Midrash Rabbah tells us that sun and moon rise daily to the region of *zevul* to prostrate themselves and that their light emanates from that region, the Psalmist calls on them to praise the Lord, at this point. We base this on Habakuk 3,11 "*shemesh, yareach amad zevulah, le-or chitzecha yehaleychu*". *Sun and moon stood towards zevul*, they orbit by the light of Your arrows.

Having urged the inhabitants of *zevul* to praise the Lord, – we now hear the sun, moon and stars of the *rakia* being called on to praise the Lord. The connection with *zevul* is, that the sun and moon derive their energy NOT from the *shechakim* but from *zevul*.

The author suggests as reason that *zevul* is considered the seat of the celestial sanctuary the following. We have the tradition in the Midrash that man's iniquity, starting with Adam, forced the *Shechinah*, G'd's Presence to withdraw in 7 stages to the "highest" heaven *arvot*. These stages were punctuated by Adam, Kayin, the idol worshipping generation of Enosh, the generation of the deluge, the builders of the tower of Babel, the Sodomites, and the sexual licentiousness of the Egyptians at the time of Abraham. (compare Bereshit Rabbah 19,7)

The reversal of this trend began with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

4Praise Him, highest heavens, and you waters that are above the heavens.
5Let them praise the name of the LORD, for it was He who commanded that they be created.
6He made them endure forever, establishing an order that shall never change.
7Praise the LORD, O you who are on earth, all sea monsters and ocean depths,

This would bring the *Shechinah* back to the heaven called *zevul* in Jacob's time.

The temple on earth is due to Jacob's merit, who had proclaimed the site on which he had dreamed of the ladder as *bet elokim* a house of G'd. (Genesis 28,17)

At the same time, Jacob had realized that the reason he had had the dream THERE was because this was the gateway to heaven, i.e. to G'd's presence in *zevul*.

It is logical therefore, that the celestial sanctuary should be assumed to be in *zevul*, "opposite" the terrestrial sanctuary. Various Midrashim elaborate further on this theme, some being quoted by the author.

4. Only now does the Psalmist get back to call upon the inhabitants of the *shechakim* to praise the Lord. He refers to the *shechakim* as *shemey hashamayim*, the heavens of the heavens, seeing they act as heavens to the second *rakia*. Our sages have stated that each of the 7 *reki-im* when referred to independently, is called *shamayim*, heaven (in the plural). There is justification then for the word *shechakim* being in the plural also. One can therefore refer to it as *shemey hashamayim* the heavens of the heavens.

Since the inhabitants of the *shechakim* have the good fortune of grinding the Mannah for the righteous in the future, they have reason to praise the Lord.

Also the waters "above" the heavens. We have explained in our commentary on Genesis chapter 1, that originally "water" and "water" existed in confusion, mixed with one another, hence the reference to *tohu va-vohu*, chaos. Only when G'd separated the two kinds of water by suspending one drop between the lower world and the "higher" world, making it into the world of galaxies, did the "upper", i.e. spiritual waters attain an independent existence. This in turn, enabled a material world to come into existence – "below". The Psalmist therefore does not name a separate domain as being the habitat of the "upper waters". He calls them *mayim me-al hashamayim*, waters

ד הַלְלוּהוּ שֶׁמֶשׁ וְיָרֵחַ הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל כּוֹכְבֵי אוֹר:
ה הַלְלוּהוּ שְׁמֵי הַשָּׁמָיִם וְהַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לַשָּׁמָיִם:
ו יְהַלְלוּ אֶת שֵׁם יְהוָה כִּי הוּא צִוָּה וְנִבְרָאוּ:
ז וַיַּעֲמִידֵם לָעַד לְעוֹלָם חָק נָתַן וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר:
ח הַלְלוּ אֶת יְהוָה מִן הָאָרֶץ תַּנִּינִים וְכָל תְּהוֹמוֹת:

beyond the heavens, to pinpoint the fact that only their independent existence made our universe (earth) possible. The "upper waters" exist in suspended animation, so to speak. They do not form a separate layer in the 7 *reki-im*.

5. They are nonetheless asked to praise the Lord also, although He had commanded only an elementary stage *be-riyah* of their separate existence.

Since Israel is described as superior, why are they the only ones not asked to praise the tetragram, which after all also contains G'd's two lettered name?

Also, WHY should those waters "above" the heavens praise the Lord, seeing they exist only in a suspended form of animation?

To these questions the Psalmist replies "because He commanded it and they were created". For this they owe a debt of gratitude. Had Israel praised G'd using the tetragram, – one would not have noticed that Israel is a citizen of both worlds, – i.e. the world G'd created with the letter *heh* and the world which G'd created with the letter *yud*.

6. The waters, in addition praise the Lord for having made their existence an eternal one, i.e. *va-ya-amidem la-ad*. Even when the physical universe, at the end of 6000 years, will return to *tohu*, chaos, not so the *mayim asher me-al hashamayim*, the waters which are beyond the heavens.

7. Having told all sections of heaven to praise the Lord, seeing they are the work of His hands, the Psalmist now tells the earth to praise the Lord, beginning with the creatures in the basic element water, i.e. the monsters of the sea, the leviathan and its mate whom G'd will eventually use to feed the righteous. (Baba Batra 74) Since there are two "deeps, interiors" i.e. *tehomot* which between them ensure the continued existence of the earth, the Psalmist invites both to praise the Lord.

Our sages have said that G'd had instructed the upper *tehom* not to infringe on the space allocated to the lower *tehom*, to avoid a collapse of the globe. (Taanit 25, on Psalm 42,8 "one interior calls to the other to obey Your channels", i.e. guidance).

Having received instructions (communication) from G'd, it is appropriate for them to praise their Creator.

8 *fire and hail, snow and smoke, storm wind that executes His command,*
9 *all mountains and hills, all fruit trees and cedars,*
10 *all wild and tamed beasts, creeping things and winged birds,*
11 *all kings and peoples of the earth, all princes of the earth and its judges,*
12 *youths and maidens alike, old and young together.*
13 *Let them praise the name of the LORD, for His name, His alone, is sublime; His splendor covers heaven and earth.*

8. Having mentioned the element water separately, the Psalmist now addresses an element which was water's partner, i.e. fire, describing their partnership as "fire and hail". By joining two such unlikely partners, G'd had worked one of His major miracles in Egypt, (Exodus 9,24), similar to the usually opposing elements of *sheleg vekitor*, snow, and a smoking furnace, both of which represents aspects of purgatory, which contains both forms of water and fire as agents of punishment.

Now, the remaining 2 elements, *ruach*, wind and *afar*, dust, earth, are mentioned. The *ruach se-arah*, stormy wind, fulfils G'd's word i.e. by stopping to blow at His command. (Psalm 107,25–29) The wind does G'd's bidding, by either blowing or ceasing to blow. Being a tool of G'd, it behooves the wind to praise G'd.

9. Finally, the Psalmist urges the last of the 4 elements, i.e. *afar*, earth, to praise the Lord, since by its definition, earth could have been flooded by the upper *tehom*, i.e. the oceans or by the lower *tehom* the liquid interior of the globe, and only G'd's command restrains the *tehomot*. Earth in all its manifestations either as hills, stately cedar trees, mountains or orchards, has ample reason to praise the Lord.

The *eytz peri*, fruit tree is mentioned last seeing it is a MEANS of praising the Lord since those who enjoy its fruit give thanks to the Provider, i.e. G'd.

Not only that, but the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* presenting the first ripe fruit in the temple as well as all the other *mitzvot* commandments, commanded in connection with agriculture are fulfilled by means of the earth or its produce. Also the fact that cedar trees were used in the construction of the temple, all combine to give earth ample reason to praise the Lord for having allotted such high ranking tasks to it.

10. Having finished with the plants, – the Psalmist turns to living

ח אֵשׁ וּבָרָד שֶׁלֶג וְקִיטוֹר רוּחַ סְעָרָה עֹשָׂה דְבָרוֹ:
ט הֶהָרִים וְכָל-גְּבָעוֹת עֵץ פְּרִי וְכָל-אֲרָזִים:
י הַחַיָּה וְכָל-בְּהֵמָה רֶמֶשׂ וְצִפּוֹר כָּנָף:
יא מַלְכֵי-אֶרֶץ וְכָל-לְאֻמִּים שָׂרִים וְכָל-שֹׁפְטֵי אָרֶץ:
יב בַּחוּרִים וְגַם-בְּתוּלוֹת זְקֵנִים עִם-נְעָרִים:
יג יְהַלְלוּ אֶת-שֵׁם יְהוָה כִּי-נִשְׂגָּב שְׁמוֹ לְבַדּוֹ הוֹדוֹ עַל-אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמָיִם:

creatures, both free roaming ones and domesticated ones, as well as the birds and the crawling creatures.

Perhaps the letter *heh* in front of the word *chayah* – though undoubtedly a collective term for ALL the free roaming beasts – is also a hint at the *techashim*, a species that became extinct after providing hides for the cover of the tabernacles. (Yebamot 102).

The term *kol behemah*, all domesticated beasts, may refer to animals fit as sacrifices on the altar. The distinction of the crawling creatures may be found in the Midrash which states that whenever G'd is angry and looks at the world, seeing the crawling creatures brings out His attribute of mercy.

The birds, *tzippor tahor*, are suitable as offerings to atone for the sins of man and as such have reason to praise the Lord who has assigned this function to them.

11. Having mentioned the inarticulate living creatures, David turns to the articulate ones, i.e. the human beings, commencing with the gentile nations whom G'd allowed to continue to exist even at a time when the temple was standing under Solomon, and on whose behalf Israel offered 70 bulls on each festival of tabernacles, (Numbers 29,13–32, compare Rashi on verse 18) so that they would not become extinct.

12. Finally, the Psalmist again addresses Israel, singling out the young men and young girls – of whom the prophet Amos 8,13 has said "on that day, young men and young girls will faint from thirst". They have special reason to praise the Lord, as have the aged, who have been promised that they will sit in the streets of Jerusalem together with the young generation. (Zachariah 8,4) It is fitting therefore, that all groups should sing the praises of the Lord.

13. The Zohar comments on the verse in Jeremiah 10,7 "that amongst all the wise men of the nations... none is like You", that what the prophet refers to are only the gentile nations. Amongst the Jews

14 *He has exalted the horn of His people for the glory of all His faithful ones, Israel, the people close to Him. Hallelujah.*

149 *Hallelujah.*
Sing to the LORD a new song, His praises in the congregation of the faithful.
2 *Let Israel rejoice in its maker; let the children of Zion exult in their king.*

however, there are people who do perform miracles like Joshua who arrested sun and moon in their respective orbits etc. (Joshua 10,12)

The parallel to the kings of the nations amongst Jews, are the Torah scholars, *chachamim*. This is what we commented on Proverbs 8,15 *bi melachim yimlochu*, by me, kings reign and decree justice. We have explained that the Torah scholars exercise their kingship by making changes in the natural order of things.

Similarly, (Psalm 89,7) "for who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord, who among the mighty can be likened to G'd". We explained that even the angels in *shechakim*, i.e. *shachak*, cannot perform what the Jewish sages are capable of performing. *Beney elim* refers to the descendants of the *elim*, another name for the patriarchs.

It is these highly placed creatures whom David calls on to praise the Lord, to go on record, that despite their illustrious position in the world, they are aware that G'd alone is *nisgav levado*, exalted. *Hodo al eretz veshamayim*, – they all extoll His majesty in heaven and on earth. The angels give praise not being able to emulate His acts.

14. Since the *chachmey yisrael* the wise men of Israel have NOT exploited their ability to perform miracles – as evidenced by *vayarem keren le-ammo* that G'd had lifted the horn of His people, i.e. equipped them with unparalleled powers, – this is a praise for all His pious ones, *tehillah lechol chassidav* who have all refrained from frivolous abuse of their G'd given talents.

The source of their power lay in being *am kerovo*, a nation close to G'd whose soul is part of G'd's "soul", superior to angels.

This is also why the Jewish people are referred to as *shivtey yud heh*, the tribes of G'd (Psalm 122,4), on whose account G'd had created both heaven and earth (heaven with the *yud* and earth with the *heh*).

Psalm **149**

1. It is well known that the 2 lettered name of G'd, i.e. *yud heh*, is

יד וַיָּרֶם קֶרֶן לְעַמּוֹ תְּהִלָּה לְכָל-חֲסִידָיו לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
עַם קְרֹבוֹ הַלְלוּיָהּ:

קמט א הַלְלוּיָהּ שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חָדָשׁ תְּהִלָּתוֹ בִּקְהַל
חֲסִידִים:
ב יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֹשָׂיו בְּנֵי-צִיּוֹן יָגִילוּ בְמַלְכָּם:

the guarantee that we will experience redemption, since He will not allow His 4 lettered name not to be restored forever. He will not forego avenging Himself on Amalek, and bring the redemption to us in the process.

The Psalmist urges us to praise the Lord who has sworn to join the remaining 2 letters to His name. At that time, ***shiru lashem***, sing to the 4 lettered name of G'd. This ***tehilato***, His praise, is subject to Israel says the Psalmist. He means that it happens when Israel becomes a ***kehal chassidav***, a community of His pious ones.

The Psalmist suggests that there is no point in waiting until the predetermined time for the redemption to become pious; rather sing such a song NOW if you have qualified as ***chassidim*** pious people, since the other salvation would not come until we are all righteous, i.e. all those who survive the ***gog umagog*** conflagration as is written in Isaiah 4,3. "And all those who remain (alive) of Zion and Jerusalem, will be pronounced holy".

Since you have the choice to repent now, (without waiting for the cataclysmic events described in Isaiah) why wait? Even in Deut. 30,2, after describing all the persecutions suffered by the errant Jewish people, an eventual repentance is forecast.

The verse in THAT sequence may be understood roughly thus. "Your conviction that G'd MUST restore His 2 lettered name to the full tetragram for His own sake, and that during that process you would experience salvation and that therefore you have delayed doing ***teshuvah***, is wrong".

The Psalmist urges Israel NOT to wait, but to sing the song now. Since a ***kehal chassidim*** is His ***tehillah*** praise, this will advance the date of redemption.

2. Should you be concerned that as a result of singing G'd's praises you would fail to do proper ***teshuvah***, repentance, and maybe even forfeit the right to redemption, the Psalmist reassures Israel by

3Let them praise His name in dance; with timbrel and
lyre let them chant His praises.
4For the LORD delights in His people; He adorns the
lowly with victory.
5Let the faithful exult in glory; let them shout for joy
upon their couches,
6with paeans to God in their throats and two-edged
swords in their hands,
7to impose retribution upon the nations, punishment
upon the peoples,
8binding their kings with shackles, their nobles with
chains of iron,
9executing the doom decreed against them.
This is the glory of all His faithful.
Hallelujah.

saying "when Israel rejoices in the One who makes him do it". G'd will see to it that you will not fail to do *teshuvah*.

Teshuvah is considered by G'd as an *assiyah*, the completion stage of anything created. We know that the wicked sinner, while alive, is called "dead", whereas when he repents he is called *chay*, live. G'd accepts *teshuvah* since it reforms man, and he sees Himself as dealing with a new personality, a new creature. The other group of people, the *beney tziyon*, are those who are not in need of *teshuvah*, – since *mitziyon teytze Torah* Torah emanates from Zion, and they are therefore not in need of transformation, i.e. an *assiyah*. *Gilu be-malkom*, they can rejoice in their King now already.

3. This would also be advantageous for the sake of G'd's honour. Why should His name remain incomplete for centuries? Better to praise Him now, i.e. the *Shechinah*, employing all kinds of musical instruments!

4. The holy spirit replies to this suggestion *ki rotzeh hashem be-ammo*, if G'd dos not bring the redemption at this time, it is NOT because He does not like His people. On the contrary, He does like His people. The problem is that G'd needs to allow each person his personal freedom in how to act. If G'd were to IMPOSE *teshuvah* at this stage, the whole concept of reward and punishment would have to be abandoned. Hence, G'd can impose such *teshuvah* only at the end of the period allocated to human history, i.e. 6000 years *yefa-er anavim*, when will G'd both adorn and humble with salvation? – only at that time (latest) will the coming of salvation become a must.

Even then G'd will wait till the people become humble, *anavim*, i.e.

ג יְהַלְלוּ שְׁמוֹ בְמָחוֹל בְּתֹף וְכִנּוֹר יְזַמְּרוּ-לוֹ:
ד כִּי-רוֹצֶה יְהוָה בְּעַמּוֹ יְפָאֵר עֲנָוִים בִּישׁוּעָה:
ה יַעְלְזוּ חֲסִידִים בְּכָבוֹד יְרַנְּנוּ עַל-מִשְׁכְּבוֹתָם:
ו רוֹמְמוֹת אֵל בִּגְרוֹנָם וְחֶרֶב פִּיפִיּוֹת בְּיָדָם:
ז לַעֲשׂוֹת נְקָמָה בַּגּוֹיִם תּוֹכֵחוֹת בַּלְאֻמִּים:
ח לֶאְסֹר מַלְכֵיהֶם בְּזִקִים וְנִכְבְּדֵיהֶם בְּכַבְלֵי בַרְזֶל:
ט לַעֲשׂוֹת בָּהֶם מִשְׁפָּט כָּתוּב הָדָר הוּא לְכָל-חֲסִידָיו
הַלְלוּיָהּ:

for the first step in the *teshuvah* process. Such conditions do not exist now.

5. All they have done is *yerane-nu al mishkevotam* they exult in G'd on their beds, letting G'd do all the fighting.

6. Not the sword or the spear will fell the enemy at that time, – rather the praises *rome-maut* of G'd are in their throats (the throats of the meek) as effective as double edged swords *cherev piphiyot*. In other words, G'd at that time, will not even wait for the people to recite the middle *berachot* benedictions in their *amidah* prayer, the section containing requests), but as soon as we recite the first benediction citing G'd's kindness to Abraham, G'd will already act.

7. *La-assot nekamah*, to take revenge on those nations, i.e. *goyim* who have oppressed us, – whereas He chastises the *le-ummim*, nations who did not engage actively in persecuting us. (see our commentary on Psalm 67,2)

8. Although David had described the fall of our enemies as due to G'd fighting, whereas Israel would merely extol His virtues, he, David, when fighting the Moabites etc. had fought a conventional war, capturing the kings, putting them in chains etc.

9. He explains that the reason he has carried out justice in THAT way was because he did not even ask G'd to make his enemies fall merely as the result of his prayer. He did not do so, in order for Genesis 49,8 *yadcha be-oref oyvecha*, your hand will be on the neck of your enemies, to be fulfilled.

The second reason is *hadar hu lechol chassidav*, it is beautifully appropriate for all His pious to witness the superiority of David over his enemies. They should appreciate that G'd defeats the enemies of Israel, using His *chassidav* as His agents. In the future, when there will be ONLY *anavim* humble ones, not *chassidim*, inexperienced in warfare, and when G'd's objective will be to fulfil the prophecy in

150 *Hallelujah.*
Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in the sky, His stronghold.
[2]*Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him for His exceeding greatness.*
[3]*Praise Him with blasts of the horn; praise Him with harp and lyre.*

Exodus 17,16 that He fights Amalek personally, the situation will be different.

Psalm 150

1. Although this final Psalm contains veiled references in it to 10 times *halle-lu* paralleling the 10 *sefirot* – we will endeavour to follow a more simple approach..

The argument about when the angels were created concerns only whether they were created on the 2nd day or on the 5th day. There is a consensus that they were NOT created on the first day, so that we should not think that the archangel Michael had assisted G'd in creating the universe. (Bereshit Rabbah 3,11)

On the other hand, the angels' creation preceded that of much of the other creatures on earth, and they were present when G'd created much of the universe.

The Psalmist urges that the G'd who has created both worlds be praised. Through our sages (Eyruvin 13) concluded that it would have been more convenient for man if he had never been placed on earth (if we had had a choice), we must conform with G'd's wishes. True, the entrance of the heavenly soul into our world, and specifically into our bodies is fraught with danger and may result in purgatory for the soul at the end of its life within the body, nonetheless since G'd's Essence is loving kindness, we must praise Him and acknowledge this.

The souls are taken from the celestial region *arvot* (Shabbat 152), the highest layer of the 7 *reki-im*, heavens, and are viewed by our sages as having contributed to creation as per Chronicles I 4,23, "they are those who fashion and dwell among the young shoots, they sat TOGETHER with the king" (the "king" being a reference to G'd). The souls of the angels emanate from a "lower" celestial region, hence *hallelu birkia uzzo*, praise Him in that particular heaven of His power. The love G'd displayed for the angels was that He permitted them to become His attendants.

קנ א הַלְלוּיָהּ הַלְלוּ-אֵל בְּקָדְשׁוֹ הַלְלוּהוּ בִּרְקִיעַ עֻזּוֹ:
ב הַלְלוּהוּ בִּגְבוּרֹתָיו הַלְלוּהוּ כְּרֹב גֻּדְלוֹ:
ג הַלְלוּהוּ בְּתֵקַע שׁוֹפָר הַלְלוּהוּ בְּנֵבֶל וְכִנּוֹר:

2. The Psalmist replies to the conviction of man that had he not been created in this material world, he would at least not have become a sinner, and would therefore have been better off instead of forfeiting his *olam haba*, eternal life.

The Psalmist says that man's assurance of *olam haba* is due only to the very fact that he first undergoes the tribulations inherent in living as a free agent in the material world.

These *yissurin*, painful experiences are what His *gevurotav*, His mighty deeds are all about.

Having successfully completed life on this planet, i.e. having coped with the temptations in this life, the *yissurim*, your souls will be greatly enhanced in stature, i.e. *rav gudlo*, and you will appreciate His greatness even more.

3. If your *yetzer hara*, evil urge has managed to lead you astray, – praise Him with the *shofar*. G'd has provided the means to overcome the *yetzer hara*, evil urge on Rosh Hashanah, New Year's day as we have shown in our commentary on Joel 2,11 *ve-hashem natan kolo lifney cheylo*, G'd assigned His "voice" to His army, *ki gadol yom hashem*, for great is the day of the Lord.

It is up to us to praise the Lord of mercy by listening to the sound of the *shofar* ram's horn arouse our hearts and cause us to return to Him so that we can be inscribed in the book of life and not the reverse.

For this institution of *teshuvah*, penitence which G'd has provided, we must praise Him.

Having done so by means of the *shofar*, we will merit to express our adulation in the temple with *nevel ve-chinor*, a variety of stringed musical instruments on the occasion of the joyous festival of Sukkot, tabernacles. Our sages have said that the proof that one's prayers have been accepted on Rosh Hashanah is the fact that one lives to take the 4 categories of plants on the festival of *sukkot*, tabernacles and give thanks to G'd. We have explained Psalm 81,4 in that sense. Knowledge of a successful Rosh Hashanah remains *kesseh*, concealed, until *yom chageynu*, the day of our being alive and well on the *sukkot* festival. It is stated in the Mishna Sukka 5,4 that on the occasion of the *simchat beyt hashoevah* the water drawing on Sukkot, all these musical instruments were played.



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69	552,540,599
75	559
86	498,877
	643,917
88	507
	Sukkah
51	97,125
52	138,173
	247,514
55	336,638,613
	Rosh Hashanah
16	129,657
17	212,498
21	39
25	20,140,428
	763,764,937
29	945
35	393
	Taanit
2	450
3	456
4	136
5	1055
9	778
10	462
19	243,253
21	648
25	43,157,285
	322,323,667
	1059
26	763
29	303,807
	Megillah
11	835
12	70,421,643
13	148,493,836
14	152,491
	630,784
15	144,383,837
16	677
25	128,890
29	53,340,490
	Moed Katan
5	363
15	30,33,35
	98,99,016
28	209,219,225
	Chagigah
11	1056
12	118,119
	464,566
	667,830
14	820,872,912
15	81,240
16	318
27	30

Daf	
	Yevamot
12	1040
16	631
24	727
61	52,50,155
	309,400
62	224
63	91
64	650,701,859
65	379
76	282,440
99	649,1025
102	1061
105	433
121	88
	Ketuvot
5	1023
17	394
30	944
33	313
57	259
58	254
68	276
104	438
110	436,920
111	603
	Nedarim
7	663
8	463
50	331,218,291
	Sotah
2	330
3	325
5	712
8	50
10	80
11	41
12	792
17	619
36	479,619
	Gittin
8	53
31	581
56	536
57	61,250,484
58	841
68	151
	Kidushin
30	9,185,327
	649,901
31	341,535
39	184,885
40	3,6,210
	254,408
49	855,701
71	754,971
81	232,923,1050
	Baba Kama
30	130
38	424
50	67,372
60	586

Daf	
Baba Kama (continued)	
92	50,72,198
	300,558
93	934
102	349
Baba Metzia	
17	170
38	836
75	79
84	79
85	13,322,413
	375,426,546
	1040,943,1006
114	52,60,809
Baba Batra	
3	955
9	259
10	261,346
15	460,664
16	319,665
17	95
59	653
74	1059
75	138,364,541
	679,881
78	458,863
117	990
Sanhedrin	
9	323
21	679,886
38	764
44	488
46	924
47	602
59	314
71	571
72	24,102,281
	404,1017
92	725
93	491,488
97	68,1006
98	75,313,514
	881,981
99	932,522
102	357
106	906
107	22,82,85
	91,168
108	1008
110	369
Shevuot	
30	408
Makkot	
23	885
24	342,953
Avodah Zarah	
2	907
4	31,48,90
	620,967
5	723,833,648
	901,1025
54	725

Daf	
Zevachim	
53	178
116	355
Menachot	
29	466,562,798
Chullin	
7	397
44	139
60	411,499,986
91	480
139	493,688
Bechorot	
55	161
Erchin	
10	550
16	186
Keritot	
5	709
Tamid	
32	233,937
Niddah	
16	90
30	896,1003,1004
45	1001

Perek	
Avot	
1,2	428
1,3	897
1,17	408
2,8	935
2,10	694
3,1	78,526,770
3,13	18
4,1	111,127
	172,327
4,2	94,131
	132,247
4,9	399,674
5,1	221,674
5,5	344
5,8	728
5,20	260
6,1	649
6,3	915
6,4	893
Sofrim	
21,9	116
66,9	460

JERUSALEM TALMUD

Berachot	
2,4	423
2,8	693
4	495
9,7	158,412
Bikkurim	
3,3	328
Chagigah	
2,1	7
2,1	486,536
Taanit	
4,5	517